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THE
GOSPEL
OF
ST. JOHN

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B.A.



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THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

BY
THOS. F. LOCKYER, B.A.

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CHARLES H. KELLY, 2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD., E.C. ;
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THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN :

AN EXPOSITION, WITH CRITICAL NOTES.

BY

THOS. F. LOCKYER, B.A.,

*Author of Expositions of the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle
of James, in the "Pulpit Commentary."*

London:

CHARLES H. KELLY, 2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD., E.C.;

AND 66, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1893

TO
MY DEAR FRIEND,
RICHARD GREEN,
WITH LASTING GRATITUDE FOR HELP AND INSPIRATION
IN THE BEST THINGS.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS little book has been written under great pressure, and in the midst of manifold other work. A kindly indulgence is therefore bespoken on the part of those who might look for a completeness, or an exactitude, of treatment which the conditions of the case did not allow.

A general obligation is here acknowledged to the commentaries of Bengel, Tholuck, Meyer, Westcott, Godet, Luthardt, and Watkins. Other, and more special, obligations are indicated in their place.

Unfortunately, the important commentary by Milligan and Moulton has not been at hand for reference; nor have the recent valuable works by Reynolds, Plummer, Dods, Nicoll, Maclaren, Peyton, and Bernard been available for consultation. To all of these, however, as well as to the aforementioned writers, the reader is earnestly

commended, for the further study of both the letter and the spirit of the fourth Gospel.

For a full discussion of the much controverted question of authorship, as of other topics more properly belonging to the department of "Introduction," the reader is referred to the forthcoming volume on "The Writings of St. John" by the Rev. G. G. Findlay, B.A., whose acknowledged competence for such work is a pledge of the best and most thorough treatment.

The quotations in this volume are mostly from the Revised Version—the reference, moreover, whether for quotation or otherwise, being always to some part of the same Gospel, when no other book of Scripture is indicated. As regards the original text, the Resultant Greek Testament, edited by Dr. Weymouth, has been generally followed; although of course the great work of Westcott and Hort is of paramount value as an independent authority, and should be always in consultation by the student.

T. F. L.

OLD TRAFFORD:

March, 1893.

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

THE APOSTLE JOHN:

LIFE, CHARACTER, LABOURS.

“The disciple whom Jesus loved. . . . This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true.”—JOHN xxi. 20, 24.

IT is important for us to know all we may of the birthplace, training, and other early associations of one with whose after life and character we have to deal; and in the case of the Apostle John we have definite though not detailed information. With regard to the first particular, as Godet says: “All the documents set forth that John was a native of Galilee. He belonged to that northern population, with whose lively, industrious, independent, warlike character Josephus has made us acquainted. The pressure exerted on the nation by the religious authorities, who had their headquarters at Jerusalem, did not weigh so heavily on that distant country. More

free from prejudice, more open to the immediate impression of the truth, Galilæan hearts presented to Jesus that receptive soil which His work demanded. Thus all His apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, seem to have belonged to that province, and it was there that He succeeded in laying the foundations of His Church." * John himself was brought up by the Lake of Galilee, where his father Zebedee followed the calling of a fisherman, and was seemingly a man of some substance. (See Mark i. 20, and comp. xv. 40, 41.) But the moulding influence would seem to have been the mother's. Her whole-hearted attachment of herself to Christ's cause shows her to have been a woman of devoted affection, and the earnest request which she made for her sons (Matt. xx. 20, 21) shows that she cherished ardent hopes concerning the Messiah's kingdom, although, like most of the people at that time, she was mistaken in her views of the nature of the kingdom. And Salome would doubtless imbue her sons with her own hopes and aspirations ; so that John, from his earliest years, would be more especially familiar with those prophecies of the Old Testament which foretold the glories of the reign of Christ.

* Godet's Commentary vol. i., p. 29.

Such then was the bringing up, and such were the early associations, of him who was hereafter to influence so largely the religious thought and life of the world. Now the first important break in the history of this quiet life was the report of the vehement preaching of the prophet of the wilderness, John the Baptist, a report which deeply stirred the soul of the young fisherman, and brought him among the crowds to the baptism of repentance. But the Baptist spoke to his followers of One greater than himself as coming after him, of whom he was only the forerunner ; and one day, when he was standing in converse with John and Andrew, this other One, the Christ, approached, and the Baptist said to his two disciples, " Behold, the Lamb of God ! " They heard ; they followed ; they had converse with Jesus—converse which convinced them that He was indeed the Christ : and thus commenced for John a new career ; henceforth he was a disciple of this other Master, and was soon called to leave all and follow Him (Matt. iv. 21, 22). Before long he finds himself, with eleven others, in the inner circle of apostles ; and among these apostles he holds a select and favoured place. There were three who formed the inmost circle : Peter, James, and John. These were with Christ, when none of the rest

were present, in the chamber of death (Mark v. 37), and as witnesses, first of the glory of the transfiguration (Mark ix. 2), and then of the agony of the garden (Mark xiv. 33). Of these three, Peter was the practical leader, John the beloved friend. Yes, "the disciple whom Jesus loved"—this was his distinguishing appellation. And the love was mutual; for it was John's great love for Jesus that took him into the palace as witness of the trial (John xviii. 15), that drew him to the foot of the cross on which his Lord hung dying (xix. 26), and that afterwards winged his footsteps with such eager speed on his way to the empty sepulchre (xx. 2-5, 8). He too was the first to recognise his risen Lord on the shore of the Galilæan lake (xxi. 7); and it is he who must follow longingly while his Master and Peter walk conversing by the beach, for he cannot bear to lose one moment of precious intercourse now (xxi. 20).

That Master, however, leaves them; and a new period of John's life opens out. Among the founders of the new Church, he and Peter are the very foremost: Peter, as ever, the active leader; John the quiet counsellor and friend. But times of trial await him. In the persecution under Herod Agrippa he loses his brother James (Acts xii. 2), and his friend Peter narrowly

escapes the same fate. But he is faithful to his trust. For we learn that, at the time of the great council that was held to discuss the obligations of the Gentile converts (Acts xv.), Peter and John, with James the Lord's brother, were "reputed to be pillars" of the Church (Gal. ii. 9). And perhaps he remained with the disciples at Jerusalem—with possible absences at intervals, on account of the claims of nearer or more distant mission work—till the last war broke out, when he would take refuge with his fellow Christians in Peræa, according to the Lord's word. But be this as it may, the death of Paul, and perhaps later of Timothy, called him to Ephesus to take charge of the Asian churches, now the most important part of Christendom.* Of his life and work here, however, little is known. An early persecution drove him to Patmos, where he wrote the Apocalypse; and after this he lived on to an extreme old age, teaching the Asian churches, confuting the heresies which there abounded, and leaving at last a rich inheritance to the universal Church in his gospel and epistles, which, with the Apocalypse, form so large a part of the New Testament Scriptures.

His character has been already indicated; for

* See Plumptre, Bible Dictionary, *in loc.*

he was pre-eminently the apostle of love—love quiet, contemplative, deep ; but capable of bursting forth now and again with vehement energy, like lightning from the surcharged electric cloud.

And his labours were in conformity with his character ; for it was his work, not to go from place to place, like the Apostle Paul, founding new churches, but, by a quiet influence on churches already gathered together, to penetrate them gradually with his own loving spirit. In addition, as we have said, the Church universal benefits by his labours, for in his writings “he being dead yet speaketh.” Of these probably the gospel is the most important ; and of all the gospels perhaps this has done most for the nourishment and purifying of the spiritual life of Christians. For the Gospel of John is not so much a record of deeds, as a picture of the interior life of the Divine Son of Man. He himself had lived in the atmosphere of that inner life, and he reproduced it so that others might live in it too.

THE MYSTERY OF LOVE.

JOHN i. 1-18.

IN the presence of the mystery of the Godhead we must not be wise overmuch. But here, in this prologue of the gospel, the veil is lifted somewhat, and the interior life of the Triune God is seen. And this as a reciprocal life of God and the Word—or, later in the chapter, of God and the Son—the Spirit being (implied) the reciprocating medium. There are different aspects of these distinctions, as just indicated. If God be considered as the infinite Intelligence and Will, then the “Word” expresses and communicates Him; if as the infinite Love, then the “Son” is His manifestation (ver. 18).

But here, chiefly, it is of God the Word that we are told. The Word? This would naturally mean,—the expression of the Divine thought, or God’s revelation of Himself; and the expression of the Divine will, or God’s executive. Let us then learn humbly what is said of the glory of this Word in His first, eternal estate, and what is said of His condescension to a lowlier.

I. THE ETERNAL WORD.

1. "In the beginning": go back to any beginning we may choose, as far as we will in the past—the Word "was." That is, He has existed from eternity. Indeed, otherwise we mutilate God's eternal nature, for the great primal Reason and the Word are indissolubly one God. So we go on to read that God's Word was ever "with God"—and "with" in a very active, vital sense; literally, "towards," and so meaning intercommunion and reciprocal life. One God, did we say? Yes; for the pre-existent Word was essential to the perfectness of the complex Divine nature. But not as a mere faculty, or subordinate part; for the Word "was God"—God's true, essential Other Self.

2. Thus far of the self-contained eternal life of God. But that life could not be self-contained. Therefore we now go on to read of the exterior relations into which it entered. "All things became through Him"—being made *by* God, the fountain and origin of all Divine doings, but *through* the Word. So in Genesis i. we read, again and again, "God said"; and so too, in Psalm xxxiii. 9, "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." But now a further development: "In Him was life"—the

fulness of it, as we have already seen ; and only from Him could it be communicated to others. And life so manifold ! Think of it, in all its orders and gradations. But, of the highest order of life with which we have to do in this world, the life human, a life which is so high because it is the reflex of the life Divine, and which is therefore “lighted” with a spiritual self-consciousness like that of God, discerning between the good and the evil—of this divinely illuminated life the Divine Word is necessarily the illuminant power. Thus this account still closely corresponds with the account in Genesis, emphasizing as that does the three special creative acts. For “all things” are made through the Word, and all “life,” and that highest life which is in the likeness of God.

II. THE INCARNATE WORD.

1. But these words go on to tell how He who had such glory “before the world was” (xvii. 5) stooped to a lowlier estate ; in other words, how “the life which was with the Father was manifested unto us” (1 John i. 2). He “became flesh.” Yes, “became” ; for it was His own will and deed, and not effected through another, as, *e.g.*, “all things became through Him” ; nevertheless, the very becoming in itself implies that

thus far He put Himself on a level with His works. "All things became," while He "was"; now He Himself "becomes," the eternal One subjecting Himself to limitations of time. And thus He shows us, as in His own human life afterwards, what is the true "glory." But what did He become? He became "flesh"—indicating the frailty, the perishableness of man's nature, to all which He willingly subjected Himself; and indicating further the totality of human nature, although by a word which in itself literally denotes but a part, because the inclusion of certain tenderer and more sensitive elements of human nature needed to be emphasized. Were there those who were teaching a pseudo-incarnation, a merely phantasmal embodiment of the Logos in human life? No; it was a genuine identifying of Himself with our nature, and not only with the more purely spiritual part of it, but with the whole, down through all the soul's sensitive feelings, to the very "flesh" which is the frail and sensitive vesture of them. He was no man in appearance merely, but in all things, save sin, our Brother! For He clothes Himself, nay, identifies Himself, as we have said, with all truest, tenderest human sympathies.

2. And in the humanity which He thus made His own, He "tabernacled" among men. This

means that His was a truly human career ; that He knew life in all its windings, its changes, its unfoldings. Also, that in this career He was closely associated with His brethren ; for they are His tent-mates, having free access to Him, united with Him in intimate fellowship of love. It indicates, further, that the sojourning was temporary ; for tent life is more properly the life of wayfarers, whose journeying by-and-by will end.

Therefore the antithesis to ver. 1 is complete. He “was,” in an eternal now, but “became,” thus entering into the time-limits of human history ; He was “with God,” in intimate fellowship with the Divine, but tabernacled “among us,” thus entering into close fellowship with the human ; He was “God,” Himself the Divine, but became “flesh,” henceforth and for ever the human too, and, while on earth, partaking in the frailty, and even the mortality, of the human.

Now once more, as John tells us in the Apocalypse, “His name is called The Word of God” (Rev. xix. 13). But our humanity is the “vesture” with which He has clothed Himself for ever, and that humanity shall be triumphant (Rev. xix. 16). Then let our manhood, our life, be linked on to His Manhood, His Life, that as He is, so we may be, in this world, and for ever !

*THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.**

JOHN i. 19-37 ; iii. 22-36.

IN ver. 23 we have the keynote of the Baptist's avowal as regards his relation to Christ. And to appreciate his conduct we must apprehend his position. He was very popular : "there went out unto him all the country of Judæa, and all they of Jerusalem ; and they were baptized of him" (Mark i. 5). And this was a moral popularity : "confessing their sins." He so laid hold of their consciences that they were compelled to hear, and an irresistible impulse of conviction constrained them to be baptized unto repentance. For John was the preacher of repentance, and for this he had been prepared by his long converse with self and God in the desert solitude. We see him then before us—a grim, gaunt man, but with the intense moral earnestness of his soul flashing from his eye and quivering through all his frame. And all the country is thrilled through and through ; and "Who is he ?" is the cry on every

* For expositions, by the same writer, of this subject and "The Marriage in Cana," see "The Homiletical Library," vol. i., pp. 142-144 ; vol. ii., pp. 92-94.

lip. So high-wrought, indeed, does the excitement become that even the Sanhedrim sends an official deputation to put the question to John, "Who art thou?" And underlying it was the other and more important question, "Art thou the Christ?" For an expectation of the Messiah was possessing men's minds: surely the set time had come! And it is John's conduct in response to these questionings that reveals his character.

1. His outspoken honesty: "he confessed, I am not the Christ." Now, being so popular, and exerting so strong a moral sway over the people, he might easily have exalted himself to Messianic honours; at any rate, he might have encouraged the half-belief that he was the Christ. Nay, might not the temptation be suggested to him, that by allowing this thought among the people for the time he would have a yet greater moral vantage, and might thus the more effectually prepare the way for the true Christ? But an honest man will not only not sell his Divine mission for the sake of self-aggrandisement, he will not encourage, nay, he will not even tacitly allow, any false beliefs concerning himself, for the sake of any supposed increase of advantage to his work. Thus John not merely replied to the unasked question which he knew was in the minds of those

priests and Levites who were sent to interrogate him concerning his mission, but to the multitudes who were not questioning at all, but only wonderingly "mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ" (Luke iii. 15), he made haste to tell the truth concerning that worthier One of whom he was only the forerunner ; and thus to them, as to the priests, "he confessed, I am not the Christ."

2. His unfeigned humility : "the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose." He was not only not the Christ, but unworthy even to be the slave of such a One. Was it easy to acknowledge thus the superiority of another, when that other was unknown, and John had the vantage-ground of so great a popularity ? To the vain it would not be easy, nor to the selfish ; but to John, whose soul was consumed with eager zeal for the coming of the kingdom of God, it was as his very breath of life to point men away from himself to this greater One.

3. His utter singleness of purpose : "Behold, the Lamb of God !" This was involved in his honesty, which would not allow him, by even tacit acquiescence in a false belief of the people, to rob the Christ of any of His glory ; and in his humility, which made him abase himself, even in the people's eyes, in the presence of

the glory that excelleth. But it stands out so prominently here as to form a special feature—indeed, it is the one outstanding feature of his character, which gathers all the rest about itself. “I am only a voice. But look, a greater One is near! I beg you, behold *Him*—*He* taketh away the sin of the world; behold, the Lamb of God!”

4. His noble, self-sacrificing disinterestedness: “they followed Jesus” (i. 37); “all men come to Him” (iii. 26). Thus, at the cost of what might seem legitimately his own things, he seeks the things of Christ. But how touching is the record in the third chapter! His was now a waning popularity. For not only had his own intimate disciples left him, but the crowds were now following Jesus. Still there is no faltering of purpose in this brave-hearted man, whatever may be the cost to his affections and sympathies in being thus left alone: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” And yet this was the severest temptation of all, when the appeal was, not to a baser, selfish susceptibility, which in him had no place, but to the nobler, the affectionate sensitiveness of one whose love for his followers was as tender as it was pure and true.

5. His true joy: “this my joy therefore is

fulfilled." For, in reality, love was not sacrificed, but crowned and consummated. Nor alone his love for his Master, in bringing the people that He might have joy of their faith ; but his love for the people also, in bringing them where they might have joy of their Lord. And how, through all the ages since, has this pure, true, high-souled joy of John the Baptist been fulfilling itself yet more and more ! To-day also, as he witnesses the joy of millions of saved sinners in their Christ,—found by them, in part, because John prepared the way,—he is saying still, as he said near Salim long ago, "This *my* joy therefore is fulfilled."

Let us, according to our opportunity, do John's work—of preparing the way of the Lord—in John's own spirit, honestly, humbly, and with self-sacrificing devotion ; and so a holy joy, like John's, shall abide in our hearts, a joy which no one shall take from us !

THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

JOHN i. 37-51.

WE can easily believe that the Baptist's heart had been strongly drawn towards John and Andrew, the young fishermen from Galilee. And it was not therefore lightly that he could point them away from himself to Jesus, and significantly hint that henceforth they should follow Him. But, as we have seen, this was his steadfast purpose and desire, to sink himself, and what might seem his own purely personal interests, and to point all men to "the Lamb of God." Thus, then, a second time he said to John and Andrew, as Jesus drew near, "Behold, the Lamb of God ! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

1. We learn, first, that Jesus meets the seeking soul.

* "They followed"—perhaps timidly, for great things had been spoken of this Stranger, and they knew not how He might receive them. But He turns, and meets them, smoothing the way for further intercourse by the question,

“What seek ye?” But they cannot tell Him, here and now, all that is in their hearts; for the questions they have to ask concern the deepest and most sacred matters of the human soul, and this is a public way, where the crowds come and go, and where curious listeners may overhear their converse. So they answer by asking, “Master, where dwellest Thou?” as much as to say, “We would talk with Thee in secret.” And very graciously He accedes to their request: “Come and see.” Thus they go with Him to His lodging-place; they have converse with Him, close and confidential, through all that evening—for it was about four in the afternoon when they met Him; and as the result of their intercourse these two disciples come away with the glad conviction in their hearts, and the joyful testimony on their lips, “We have found the Christ!”

Now, how was this conviction gained? Not as the result of elaborate argument, although perhaps they came with many questionings in their minds; questionings, however, which died away unuttered on their lips, for the gracious reality of the Divine One so impressed itself upon them that there was now no room for doubt—face to face with Him, how could they but believe? Indeed, John may be referring in

part to this first interview when he says, in chap. i. 14, "He dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory), *full of grace and truth.*" Is not this the process still by which men gain the conviction that Jesus is the Christ? Where there is one who is convinced by argument, the multitude of men become believers through the intuitive perception that in Jesus there are "grace and truth" just such as their deepest necessities crave for, and which must be Divine; and they put this conviction to the test—"of His fulness we all received, and grace for grace." Thus their faith is verified in the life, and becomes yet stronger faith; and, with the accent of men who speak of a known reality, they in their turn repeat the testimony, "We have found the Christ," while to those who would likewise be convinced they offer the evidence which has convinced them, "Come and see."

2. The soul that has found fellowship with Christ leads others to that fellowship—beginning at home. For, first, Andrew finds his brother, and brings him to Jesus; as much as to say, that only by a little did he anticipate John's action, who, as soon as he could find him, brought James to Jesus. Thus the number of the disciples is already multiplied by two; each brings a brother to Him in whom he himself has found

newness of life. True human love, indeed, should lead to this; for what greater boon can we bestow on those we love than the knowledge of a Saviour? But what a vitality is infused into the affections of human relationship by identification with Christ! for now "the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. v. 14).

3. Observe here the profound insight of the Saviour: "Jesus looked upon him, and said . . ." reading his very heart. Truly "He knew what was in man" (ii. 25; comp. also iii. 3, iv. 16, vi. 70, 71). Now what He saw, looking upon Simon, was, not so much his present capacity and fitness for the work designed for him to do, as the possibilities of such capacity and fitness to be developed hereafter: "Thou art . . . thou shalt be." And most interesting and instructive is it to trace the development, under the strong but gentle hand of Christ, from "Simon the son of Jonah"—the man of fitful and wayward natural impulse—to Cephas, or Petros, the man who is now at last fit to be as a strong foundation-stone for the support of others' faith and the helping of their growth, himself resting surely on the Petra—the live rock, Christ—"in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. ii. 21; see also 1 Pet. ii. 4-7, showing how well the lesson of

Matt. xvi. 17, 18 had been learned).* For ourselves, however, let us learn that, so soon as we come to Christ, if we will hearken, He begins to teach us what shall be our special service for Him : He gives us *a new name*.

4. Again, we learn from Philip's case that conversions are of different types : "He findeth Philip," whereas John and Andrew, and James and Simon by their help, had themselves sought and found Jesus. There is this distinction still among men, some seeking—perhaps seeking long—and finding Jesus, whereas others are all at once arrested, like Saul of Tarsus, in their mid-career ; or like Philip, when His hand is laid upon them, and His voice says, "Follow Me." But the difference is more seeming than real, for when a soul seems first to seek Christ, it is in reality Christ who prompts the search, inspiring the soul with longings for Himself ; and so He seeks and finds all men, before they can seek and find Him. But in either case the fruit is the same ; for, finding or being found of Him, we seek others, to bring them to Jesus : and so we read that "Philip findeth Nathanael."

* See Morison on this last passage, bringing out the significant distinction, so much lost sight of, between the "Petros" and "Petra" of our Lord's declaration.

5. The profound insight of Christ again manifested : "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile !" For even when Nathanael was meditating just now on the hope of Israel, and lifting up his heart to God in strong desire for its fulfilment, Jesus had read his heart : "I saw thee." What ! does this Man know his most secret thoughts ? Then, be He Nazarene or what else humanly, He is Son of God, He is King of Israel ! Yes, and so Nathanael shall learn, yet more and more, henceforth : for not only the secrets of the human, but the secrets of the Divine belong to Jesus ; all heaven opens to His view, and the intimacy is perfect between Him and God : "I and My Father are One" (John x. 30).

For ourselves, let us learn from this narrative of the first discipleship, that to have true communion with Christ, and with God in Christ, is the very essence of salvation. Also, that such living fellowship with the Divine is essentially operative in the loving endeavour to bring others into its blessedness : "that they all may be one" (xvii. 21 ; 1 John i. 1-4).

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.

JOHN ii. 1-11.

“**A**ND the third day”—*i.e.* from the day last spoken of (i. 43) ; for, as Westcott says, “the distance from the place where John was baptizing to Nazareth was about sixty miles, three days’ journey.”* Thus we are transferred from the place where John testified of Jesus to the region which was the scene of so many of those works that bore witness of Him, and where He spoke those words by which He bore witness of Himself. And as one link of connexion between the chapters we may remember that Nathanael was “of Cana in Galilee” (xxi. 2). Of the three claimants to identification with the Cana of our narrative, *viz.* Kefr Kenna, five miles from Nazareth, Khurbet Kâna, eight or nine miles distant, and 'Ain Kânah, only a mile and a half away, the first has the traditional right to the honour, and, as some think, a right which is confirmed by recent research. Henderson, in his “Hand-book on Palestine,” quotes the following descrip-

* Westcott's Commentary, *in loc.*

tion of the place from Dr. Zeller, who, with the advantage of residence at Nazareth, decided in favour of the traditional site : " Kefr Kenna lies five miles north-east of Nazareth on the direct road to the Sea of Galilee. Its situation is particularly suitable, pretty, and healthy ; for the village lies on a hill gradually sloping down towards the west, so that the houses, built in terraces up the slope, receive the cool west wind. On the south the village is separated by a valley from the higher mountains, separating it from Mount Tabor and the Plain of Jezreel. At the south of the village is a copious fountain of excellent water. The gardens at the foot of the hill are luxuriant, and the pomegranates produced there the best in Palestine " (pp. 152, 153). This Cana was called Cana of Galilee to distinguish it from another place of the same name on the borders of Phœnicia, and being so near to Nazareth, it would be perfectly familiar to Mary and her household. Indeed, it was probably an intimate friend of the family whose marriage was being celebrated, for Mary speaks to the servants (ver. 5) as having some right to command them : was it possibly a daughter of Mary who had been brought as a bride to the Cana home ? If so, and if further we incline to accept the tradition that Nathanael was the bride-

groom,* not only does the sequence of this narrative upon the record of the first discipleships receive an added meaning, but the narrative itself gains in beauty, as setting forth the sweet considerateness of Jesus for the claims of kindred, and His gracious assumption of the innocent humanities of the life of His disciples among the enduring sanctities of the kingdom of eternal life.

I.

To this wedding-feast Jesus and His disciples were invited ; perhaps indeed it was His invitation which had brought them just now to Galilee again (i. 43). But if Jesus alone had been invited beforehand, and His disciples were asked only on their arrival with Him at Cana, we have some explanation of the failure of wine at the feast, and also of the appeal made by Mary to Jesus to do something to relieve the embarrassment. What it was that she expected Him to do we can hardly tell. Bengel thinks her words were a hint that He and the disciples should withdraw ; but this is very unlikely. On the other hand, the common interpretation of her words as implying the expectation that He would work some miracle is equally unlikely, for she

* See Bible Dictionary, art. *Nathanael*.

knew nothing as yet of His power to work miracles at all, and in any case would hardly expect the power to be used for the first time at a wedding-feast. But to Him, as the eldest son of the Nazareth home, she had been accustomed to look for help in any emergency—Joseph, as it would seem, having been removed by death ; and what more natural than that she should simply appeal to Him in this present perplexity, not suggesting any special method of help, but assured that in some way or other He would help ? And help He will, as in every real difficulty of those among whom He comes. But, tenderly, we may be sure, and half playfully, He replies, “Lady, leave that to Me ; the moment is not at hand yet ” (see Note). Accordingly He waits till it is time for the next filling of the cups, and then gives the directions that issue so wondrously in the relief of the situation. Now what were these directions ? They are commonly understood as meaning that the large vessels containing the water for ablutions, which had been wholly or partially emptied before the feast began, were to be refilled, and that from them the water was to be drawn for the filling of the cups, this water, in the sequel, being changed into wine, either as it stood in the vessels, or as it was drawn for use. But was

it likely that vessels containing the water for ablutions would be put to so strange a purpose? Westcott says, "The original word is applied most naturally to drawing water from the well (iv. 7, 15), and not from a vessel like the water-pot. Moreover, the emphatic addition of *now* seems to mark the continuance of the same action of drawing as before, but with a different end. Hitherto they had drawn to fill the vessels of purification: they were charged *now* to 'draw and bear to the governor of the feast.' That which remained water when kept for a ceremonial use became wine when borne in faith to minister to the needs, even to the superfluous requirements, of life." * And, as he says in commenting on the filling of the vessels "to the brim," "This preliminary work was done completely, so that the contents of the vessels were obvious to all."

II.

But to pass on to the main lessons that this narrative teaches us. And first of all, how significant it is that our Lord's inauguration of His public life was so in contrast with the habits of John the Baptist! "The Son of Man came eating and drinking" (Matt. xi. 19): as much as to say, that, however seemly and natural it

* Westcott's Commentary, *in loc.*

may be for those who are in face-to-face contact with the awful reality of sin, whether in the season and struggle of repentance themselves or in seeking to bring others to repentance, to have no taste then for the more festal aspect of life, and hardly to heed the claims of its common necessities, yet the ultimate scope of Christ's redemption, as of the Creator's original design, includes and involves the hallowing and perfection of all life's innocent pleasantness and joy. The sternness of the ascetic may have its place, yet only as an expedient, not as being of any intrinsic worth or obligation ; but festal joy rather than ascetic gloom is more consonant with the essential spirit of Christianity.

Again, and in accordance with this hallowing of all true and sweet humanities, our Lord would affirm at the very outset, and once for all, the sanctity of family life. If not the transient good things of life's daily course, then certainly not the permanent personal relationships of life, are to be ignored by His followers. For "He which made them from the beginning made them" one man and one woman, husband and wife, each for the other and both as one (Matt. xix. 4) ; and that which was thus wrought into the very essence and texture of true human life from its beginning, and of which the maltreat-

ment and perversion have made so much woe in the world and so grievously defiled and debased it, shall surely be recovered, cleansed, redeemed by Him who came making all things new. Thus the benediction of Eden is breathed again at Cana, and with this twofold blessing the mutual love of wedded life and the clustering affections of family and home pass on toward their perfection.

Nor must we omit to learn from this narrative the beauty and grace of thoughtful kindness, as exemplified in our Lord's so considerate relief of the host and wedding guests from their embarrassment. For it is in kind deeds and words that religion finds its fitting manifestation and embodiment, and the graceful courtesies in which true kindness is conveyed are no superfluous appendage, but rather the delicate efflorescence and fragrance of love.

Thus then He "manifested forth His glory"—the glory as of One who was "full of grace and truth" (i. 14); and it was the outflashing of this glory, the glory of gracious love, that was for the education of His disciples' faith. Let our eyes therefore be ever open to the discernment of His gracious kindness, and so all the water of life will be transmuted into wine, and He will lead us on "from faith to faith."

THE LORD OF THE TEMPLE.

JOHN ii. 12-25.

“HE went down”—*i.e.* to the sea-shore : note the topographical accuracy. “To Capernaum” : called “His own city” in Matthew ix. 1 ; so that at some time or other it would seem to have become His home, instead of Nazareth. But very soon the Passover calls Jesus to Jerusalem, and the remaining part of this chapter and the whole of the next are concerned with events that took place there or in the neighbourhood. Moreover, as Westcott observes, “the events recorded in this section really determined the character of His after ministry. He offered Himself by a significant act intelligible to faith as the Messiah : His coming was either not understood or misunderstood ; and, after a more distinct revelation of His Person in Samaria, He began His work afresh as a prophet in Galilee. Henceforward He appeared no more openly as Messiah at Jerusalem till His final entry.”*

* Westcott's Commentary, *in loc.*

I. THE PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

As a boy of twelve, He must be in His Father's house (Luke ii. 49) ; and now His first business in Jerusalem is to visit the temple. The temple premises consisted of the inner sanctuary, the court of the priests, the court of Israel, the court of the women, and, outside of all, the court of the Gentiles. This last was an open paved space, surrounded by a great colonnade, and divided from the inner courts by a flight of steps and a partition of lattice-work, while an inscription forbade any foreigner nearer access to the sanctuary. The traffic in birds and beasts for sacrifice, and the exchange of Gentile for Jewish coins, which was carried on so openly in the court of the Gentiles, had perhaps gradually insinuated itself within the temple precincts ; but now it went on unrebuked. Nor was this merely in itself a desecration of a sacred place, but much more was it a desecration of the spirit that should find its home at such a shrine, for unhallowed greed, and even fraudulency, were the prevailing characteristics of these transactions (see Matt. xxi. 13). And what aggravated the offence was that the court of the Gentiles should be thus treated, as though their presence and participation in the worship were only con-

temptuously tolerated, not graciously and freely welcomed.

This then was the sight that aroused Christ's wrath ; and His anger in the presence of such iniquity is the counterpart of the wrath of God against sin—so real, so awful, and yet now so forgotten a fact !—and the sanction of our holy indignation against all deliberate wickedness. And how overawing is the majesty of His anger ! For they yield, unresisting as it seems, to His uncompromising expulsion of them from the holy ground (comp. John vii. 46, xviii. 6).

II. THE GREAT SYMBOLIC PROPHECY.

But though they give way, being convicted by their own conscience, and though their abettors, "the Jews"—*i.e.* the people who witnessed the scene, and especially the priests and scribes who were their leaders, and who were really responsible for the profanation—made no sort of protest against the expulsion itself, yet these Jews attempt to conceal any confusion they may have felt by asking what right He had to constitute Himself the authority in these things : "What sign showest Thou unto us ?" And the answer to this demand—what a quick, illuminative flash of spiritual insight it betokened ! and how far-reaching was its scope ! At the same

time, how it showed that holy wrath still glowing hotly, and if possible more consuming in its sacred jealousy of indignation than before ! For their very demand for a sign, as indicating in itself their utter unspirituality, and, from its connexion, their stubborn ignoring of the great issues at stake, was but an aggravation of the original offence. Therefore He says, hurling His words at them like hot thunderbolts, “Go on with your work of utter desecration, as you have begun ; continue to profane and destroy the very spirit of your religion—the religion which this temple symbolizes, and in which it centres ; yea, set yourselves, as I know you will, against Me who am come to fulfil and perfect your religion ; oppose Me, hate Me, kill Me, and in so doing destroy essentially your religion itself, and therefore all the real meaning of your temple economy, however you may blindly cling to its outward forms : yes, ‘destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” For, though their murder of their own Messiah was an act of national and spiritual suicide, and as truly an abolition of their own economy as though they had wantonly and defiantly torn down the temple itself, and polluted its holy place—yea, infinitely more so, for their Messiah was surely the Holiest of holies of their religion—yet religion was not

to be lost to the world. Though they were wilful losers, the very Gentiles whom they despised, and whose right they contemptuously profaned, should gain ; for by His resurrection from death He would inaugurate a spiritual kingdom whose blessings should be the heritage of all men, a religion for the world which should be in truth the revival and perfecting of the religion which the Jews, for their own part, malignantly destroyed.

III. THE FALSE FAITH.

They had asked for signs, and during His stay in Jerusalem many signs were wrought by Him. Not, however, to gratify their morbid craving, but because He could not see the ills of the people and refrain from relieving them. And, "beholding His signs, many believed on His name" (see iv. 45). But theirs was no true discipleship ; merely to believe that He was the Messiah was not the same as to yield the heart to His Messianic claims (comp. viii. 30, 31 ff.). Therefore He could hold no trustful intercourse with them ; for trust must be mutual, and theirs was no trust, but merely assenting opinion.

What then is our faith ? Mere creed ? That in itself is nothing. Mere self-seeking ? That is worse than nothing. A moral self-surrender,

a loving, trustful, complete surrender to Him in whom we believe—this is the only faith that saves.

The whole narrative teaches us that the religion of these Jews was a religion of mere outwardness, even this being desecrated by the greed of an eager mammon-worship, and the mammon-worship made worse still by the unrighteousness of fraud and wrong. How is it with us? For He who saw their iniquity sees into our hearts ; and if it be with us as it was with them, He who knows what is in man will count our false faith for nothing, He will refuse to impart Himself, and by-and-by, over the desecrated and deserted temple of our life the words will be written, “The glory is departed.”

THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN iii. 1-11.

NICODEMUS has been somewhat unreasonably reproached with cowardice for coming to Jesus by night. This was probably only a characteristic caution; for we must remember that he knew as yet but little of Jesus, and wished to satisfy himself further as to who and what He was before committing himself publicly. And indeed, busy as the Master was among the people in the daytime, when but after nightfall could such intercourse as this be had? So he comes, with a very earnest question in his heart, though he dares hardly frame it on his lips: the miracles of which he has heard (ii. 23), some of which possibly he has seen, proclaim Jesus to be a Divine Teacher; *is He perhaps also the Messiah of the kingdom?*

In His reply Jesus takes hold of the inner thought of His enquirer; He answers the unuttered question. And yet but indirectly: "Unless a man be reborn, he can have nothing to do with God's kingdom at all." This perplexes Nicodemus. An earthly kingdom, such

as the Jews mostly were looking for, suggests by analogy an earthly birth, and how can this be re-experienced?

Then Christ puts the truth in plainer words. What is wanted is a moral cleansing and a spiritual quickening. Men by nature are sinful and selfish, and to be pure and spiritual necessitates a new beginning. Or, to revert to the first expression, there must be a rebirth.

But does the enquirer wonder how this is possible? "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii. 20). The metaphysical process of the new birth may be hidden from you, just as the laws that regulate the seemingly capricious winds, as they come and go, may be past your finding out; but the fact of the new birth is palpable enough: it proves itself, like the sighing and moaning wind.

I. THE NECESSITY OF A NEW BIRTH.

It is the necessity of such a change that is first of all, and chiefly, insisted on by our Lord in this conversation. Now we must assume as postulates that by the very constitution of our nature we have relations to duty and to God: we carry the inward and insuppressible attestation, "I ought," about with us everywhere; we carry about with us also a consciousness of God.

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Postulating then these two fundamental truths, we base upon them two facts : the " I ought " of conscience has been violated, and our sense of spiritual kinship with God has been disregarded and profaned. For, not to take the abundant but superfluous proofs from the larger history of the race, must not every one of us, when the charge is brought home, make the acknowledgment, " Against Thee have I sinned, and done that which is evil " (Ps. li. 4) ? Nay, further, this wrong-doing and ungodliness is not incidental, occasional, but there is an inheritance of evil nature in us all, which, if followed utterly, would lead to a wholesale violation of duty, to a total disregard of God. An inheritance ? Yes, that is the obvious fact, however it be explained : " that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

Now of this inherited evil nature we certainly cannot say that it makes no difference with regard to our fitness for membership in an ordinary earthly community if the promptings of sin be followed, for it grievously unfits us even for the common tasks and duties of the citizenship of this world. Still it is not a bar to membership in such communities ; indeed, the ordinary communities of the world are made up largely of those who, more or less, indulge themselves in sin, and hence the imperfectness,

and in some cases the utter corruption, of them, according to the proportion and degree in which this evil membership prevails. But if we believe God has a kingdom, we cannot enter that ; if there be any Divine community among men, in it we can have no part. For a Divine kingdom is based on just those two truths of human nature which in us are wrecked, if by God's mercy they are not dead—the moral, the spiritual. And for us, with our sin, to enter the kingdom of God—this, if it were conceivable, would be like creatures from the tombs making their way into a city of living men.

To belong to any kingdom of God, then, it is imperatively demanded that we have a new nature, that we live a new life. In other words, “Ye must be born again.”

II. THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH.

The very figure employed by our Lord implies a thorough, vital change. Not polished manners, with bad morals ; not a constrained outward morality, with a bad heart ; not even a good heart as regards common duties, with deadness of spiritual nature ; nay, not even a respectable life, and a respectable religiousness besides,—this is not to be reborn ; this is but to be mended, patched. But to be reborn means a change

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through and through, a vital change, a change taking hold of the innermost springs of man's being, a radical transformation.

It must be a Divine-human change. Without God it cannot be accomplished, as all history shows, as all experience teaches. Indeed, in so far as there are now any good intents and desires, it is that God's regenerating influences are already working. But it is very needful to bear in mind that this is a change depending for its effectuation on our willing co-operation with God. "Ye must"—and yet ye may not! For there is no coercion here. Man has the power, certainly not to regenerate himself, but to bring about the regenerating change, to open the channel for the full inflow of Divine power. In this respect nature is a parable to us: for just as in agriculture, in navigation, in chemistry, in electricity, and all such spheres of human enterprise and achievement, man would be impotent but for the fact that the great forces of the world lend themselves to his will, and yet these same forces would not accomplish the desired result if man were not willing so to use them; in like manner, although only the grace of God can make a man a new creature, yet only as man willingly avails himself of that grace will he be made new.

Again, the change is twofold in its actual character, as answering to those two elements of our nature which we have seen to be in ruin because of sin—the moral, and the spiritual. So our Lord says, “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” To take the first phrase as having any reference to baptism is intelligible on the part of those who regard baptism as *ipso facto* a spiritual process; but regarding it as only in itself an outward and spiritually ineffective rite, even though the concomitant, according to the intent of its institution, of spiritual conditions, to be fulfilled by those concerned, and so fulfilled, by its help, that God fulfils the conditions on His part, sealing the gift and promise of His grace—thus regarding it, we cannot read into the words any reference to baptism at all. Indeed such a reference would contravene the whole tenor and aim of our Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus, which was meant to lead him away from his reliance on the external, and to make him apprehend the supreme necessity of spiritual salvation. But though there is no intended reference to baptism—indeed, Christian baptism was not yet instituted, and John’s baptism was not permanent—yet there is certainly an emphatic use of the same figure which

baptism does itself symbolically express ; *viz.* that, as water avails for the purifying of the body, so man can be, and, if he is to enter God's kingdom, must be, morally cleansed, or purified of his evil doings and of the defilement of his evil thoughts. The Jews, with their familiar ceremonial of purification by water, would readily understand this allusion ; John's baptism had just now made the meaning yet more prominent and emphatic ; and Christian baptism, when it should be instituted by-and-by, would be itself a permanent restatement of the truth, so insisted upon by Christ, set forth in the whole ministry of the Baptist, and made easily intelligible to all men by this symbol, that the very first requisite, if we would be saved, is that, wherever the operation of our own will and purpose can avail anything, we obey the ancient injunction, never to be superseded while the world lasts, "Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes ; cease to do evil" (Isa. i. 16).

But how much there is which the mere will and purpose of man can never accomplish ! For his deeds he is directly responsible, and over his thoughts he has already more or less control ; but the inmost desires and affections of his nature, how shall these be changed ? And un-

less these be changed, as we have already seen, he is not morally born again, to say nothing of the spiritual rebirth which itself is imperatively necessary if we would see God's kingdom. So that, not only for its own sake, but to make the moral cleansing of our nature effectual and complete, there must be likewise a spiritual quickening, which obviously only the Spirit of God can work. John the Baptist had spoken of this, when he said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. iii. 11)—a saying which was fulfilled, how wondrously! at Pentecost. If then the baptism of water indicates a moral cleansing, and this more or less of the outside merely of man's life, a cleansing such as, under the gracious influences of the gospel, he himself can effect, what is the baptism of the Spirit but "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. v. 5), flooding our whole nature with its healing streams; or, to take the Baptist's yet more striking figure, burning and purging, "like sacrificial flame," as it penetrates all our being, energizing the spiritual faculties, and impelling to the devoted consecration of the redeemed life to God?

And, as corresponding with this twofold nature

of the great necessary change, our Lord puts in the very forefront of His ministry of salvation the demand, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 15). So that, however mysterious the process of the change may be, our part is plain—to renounce sin, and accept Christ as the life of our life.

By this teaching two prevailing errors of our day are condemned: the externalism into which so much of the religious faith and life of Christendom is developing, and in which it is in danger of being merged and lost; and the seemingly liberal but really lax comprehension, which would take for granted that all the members of our redeemed race are necessarily themselves truly redeemed. Our Lord, however, clearly declares that the essential change must be inward, not outward; and that therefore it must be one to which the individual participant freely and fully consents.

THE HEAVENLY THINGS.

JOHN iii. 12-21.

“IF I told you earthly things, and ye believe not”—referring to the slowness of apprehension which Nicodemus had displayed in regard to matters that lie open to our immediate cognisance, things that pertain to our own nature, facts of our earthly experience—“how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?” *i.e.* things that pertain to the character and counsels of God. In other words, if Nicodemus finds it so hard to recognise the necessity and nature of a new birth, how can he be expected to receive what may be said of that Divine redemption which alone makes the new birth possible?

Of these heavenly things Christ is the authoritative Revealer, He who comes from the heavens, who shall rightly reascend to those heavens that are His home, and who meanwhile, despite His bodily tabernacling on earth, abides evermore in spiritual fellowship with the realities of the spiritual world.

Whether, then, Nicodemus will receive His sayings or not, He sets forth in brief the redeem-

ing work which God will accomplish through Him, as in vers. 14, 15; and in the following words John expands that utterance, as himself more fully taught by the Spirit of Christ.

I. A HUMAN AND A DIVINE NECESSITY.

1. Humanly necessary. For else man must perish. Death has seized upon him, like the venom of the serpents in the wilderness, poisoning and corrupting the very fountains of his life. In such a case no self-help is possible, for the only self-helping faculty, the will, is itself the seat and centre of the disease. But even were there the inclination towards self-recovery from sin, this would but teach man his own impotence; for how shall the depraved, corrupted will venture to lift itself towards the insulted God? and how shall it rise above the paralysing consciousness of the guilt of the past? "The Son of Man *must* be lifted up"—it is a human necessity that help should come from outside; that, as in the case of the Israelites of old, the initiative of salvation should be with God, if man is not to perish in his sin.

2. Divinely necessary. For God cannot let man perish. His justice indeed would not allow Him to leave man to develop his sinful, helpless race through all the generations unredeemed.

But the great Divine necessity is the constraint of infinite love. And, understanding it thus, need we shrink from saying that God *must* save men? There can be no possibility of coercion from without. But just as, if a man saw his child in sudden danger of death, he must, if he loves it, snatch it from destruction—the compulsion of love commands him, and he freely acknowledges its sovereignty—so God, seeing His children involved in destruction through their sin, must do His utmost to save them from death to life. Thus the evangelist declares, “God *so* loved the world, that He gave,” etc. Loving men so much, He could do no other.

II. DIVINE-HUMAN IN ITS THREEFOLD CHARACTER.

What was the redemption, thus humanly and divinely necessary?

1. A perfect life. God sent His Son “into the world”—see also i. 14. What each man needs, for one thing, is a true ideal of goodness; and such an ideal, if it is to be realised by him, must be exhibited as realised already in another, and that perfectly. No abstract rules would suffice; we could not properly understand them, they would not have the warmth to command our sympathies, and we should have no assur-

ance that the character commanded by them was attainable.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.*

“And we beheld His glory,” and were entranced and captivated by it.

2. A sacrificial death. Even while we see His beauty, and desire to follow such a one, a chilling shadow falls upon the brightness ; for how shall the guilt of the past be put away ? Indeed the sight of His holiness only intensifies our sense of sin. But Christ has put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. ix. 26).

Let us remember that this was a truly human sacrifice ; the “Son of Man” was lifted up. And thus the human race did, in a sense, expiate its own sin through its own great Representative. “Because we thus judge, that One died for all, *therefore all died*” in Him, virtually participating in His atoning work (2 Cor. v. 14).

It was also, however, a Divine sacrifice—Divine indeed, all through, as of God’s providing ; but Divine in its own intrinsic nature also, as well as human, that thus it might have infinite value, and that it might be the Divine love’s own

* Tennyson’s “In Memoriam,” xxxvi.

self-sacrifice. So, if it was the "Son of Man" who was lifted up, it was God's "Only Begotten" who was given; and the great impulsion to holy obedience on our part is in the knowledge that we are "the Church of God, which He purchased *with His own blood*" (Acts xx. 28).

3. A glorified life. Besides the attractive ideal presented to us in our Lord's perfect life on earth, and the expiation of His sacrificial death, we need the actual power of a new life for ourselves, enabling us evermore to die with Him unto sin, and to live even as He lived. And this power is communicated by the Spirit of the living Christ, ever proceeding now from His Divine humanity, as glorified, and therefore replenished with infinite resources. See i. 16, iii. 13, and the expression "lifted up" (ver. 14), which may have here, as in xii. 32, a double significance. Never till after the ascension was the "Spirit of Christ" given to men; till then He was the Spirit of God, but now, as proceeding from the Divine humanity of our Lord, His influences are human as they never were before (see vii. 39).

III. UNTO LIFE, AND YET UNTO DEATH.

1. Unto life—for this, and this only, was the aim of the redemption. It was not condemnatory in its purpose.

2. Unto death—for, if not in its purpose, yet in its effect it is condemnatory, being itself the judgment of those that believe not. The rejection of such love is itself how heinous ! But the sin insisted on here is rather the deliberate and stubborn clinging to evil which this rejection implies. It is as though the thick growths that had closed up the entrance of some cavern were at last removed, letting the pure, sweet sunshine in ; and while some little songster there that had lost itself in the gloom fluttered forth joyously to meet and greet the daylight, being a creature of the day, the loathsome things that loved the darkness, being creatures of the gloom, were affrighted, and hasted to hide themselves from the light, the light itself thus judging and condemning them ; for so, when men love the darkness rather than the light, their deeds being evil, this *is* the judgment !

Thus Christ's saving work itself is a testing, dividing, and judging work ; He is already parting men to the right and to the left (Matt. xxv. 32, 33) ; and, as the aged Simeon foretold, He is set for the falling as well as for the rising up of many in Israel, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed (Luke ii. 34, 35). As He said to Pilate, " Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice " (John xviii. 37).

In this wise even now Christ is among us. He moves amid the churches, He bends over the world. He is pure light and essential love. The brilliancy of the light irradiates, but it casts a shadow too ; the glow of the love melts and purifies, but it scathes and scorches too. Let us remember, for our warning, that Jesus Himself said of the stone, "rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious" (1 Pet. ii. 4), "Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust" (Luke xx. 18). If, however, "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (1 John iv. 16), we shall not come into condemnation, but have passed out of death into life (John v. 24)—the eternal life which is in His Son (1 John v. 11).

O wondrous grace! O boundless love!

CHRIST AT THE WELL.

JOHN iv. 1-26.

TWO things claim attention in the former part of this chapter : the profound spiritual utterances of our Saviour (vers. 13, 14 ; 23, 24 ; 26 ; 34 ; 37), and the historical setting in which those utterances appear. For this latter is not only interesting as a picturesque framework, but in itself it suggests various thoughts incidentally which are far too important to be overlooked. So it will be most convenient to take the chapter in its sequence, noticing the side-truths, but paying special attention to the main truths.

1. We learn first a lesson of Christian expediency. In the early days of the Church there were those who courted martyrdom, rushing eagerly upon death that they might win the crown. But thinking to win they were really losing, for they threw away the life which must never be closed except by God. If duty demands that the Christian risk his life, then he has no choice ; but unless fidelity to duty actually demands its imperilment, he must do his utmost

to preserve his life, and use it well, for the kingdom of God's sake. So our Lord instructed His apostles, "When they persecute you in this city, flee into the next" (Matt. x. 23); and so He Himself, knowing that the success of His ministry (iii. 22, 26) was exciting the jealousy of the Pharisees, "left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee" (see i. 43).

2. Parenthetically it is noticed that "Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples": for not only was baptism then, as always, subordinate and secondary to the preaching of the gospel, as Paul reminds us (1 Cor. i. 17), but in this case it was not Christian baptism that was being administered—this being not yet instituted; it was rather a continuation of the baptism of John, and it was hardly for Jesus to take up the work of His forerunner, although temporarily His disciples might do so.

3. The journey of Jesus through Samaria was simply a matter of convenience, and not for the purpose of any special work; though it is to be noted that, while some of the Jews carried their hatred of the Samaritans so far as even to avoid their country, He of course would countenance no such wicked prejudice, and therefore took that route unhesitatingly as the quickest to Galilee. Nevertheless, an unsought work awaited

Him in Samaria ; and although He afterwards instructed His disciples to go for the present merely "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (see Matt. x. 5, 6), and Himself acted generally on that principle (Matt. xv. 24), yet He would not leave any true work undone, among Samaritans or Gentiles, that came fairly in His way. And His gracious dealings with the people of Sychar are an instance, much to be prized, of the wide humanness of His mission in its ultimate intent, however restricted at first by the claims of the elder covenant ; for though "*the salvation*" (see ver. 22, literally), when it should be ready to spring forth in the fulness of its power and blessing after the finishing of our Lord's saving work, was to be "*from the Jews*," yet it was *for* "the world" (see ver. 42), and as such He dispenses it now to these Samaritans.

4. And not only is the humanness of His mission so well illustrated in this narrative, but also the true humanness of His nature. How near it brings Him to us, compassed as we are with manifold infirmity, when we read that "Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus by the well," and in His thirst, after the hot walk in the noontide heat, said to the woman, "Give Me to drink"! The Docetic heresy, which taught that our Lord's bodily nature was only an

appearance, finds little countenance here ; on the contrary, we have in these words a vivid illustration of the truth that, "since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same," and was made "in all things like unto His brethren" (Heb. ii. 14, 17).

5. But how can it be that He, a Jew, should ask drink of a Samaritan, and that Samaritan forsooth a woman? Ah! had she only known who He was, hers would have been the asking, and His the giving. And, as she is still puzzled to know whence He has the "living water" that He speaks of, and what it is, He declares, "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." For, while all worldly satisfactions, like the water of Jacob's well, satisfy only in part and for a season—there has to be a repeated coming to the well's mouth to draw, and then our deepest cravings are untouched by the draught we gain; on the other hand, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 39), satisfies wholly and for ever—our uttermost needs are supplied, and

always supplied. And this love of God, which is like a living fountain in our souls, not only refreshes us now in the house of our pilgrimage, but it mounts, and bears us with it, heavenward, to the glorious heights of the eternal life from which it is ever fed.

6. Hearing this, the woman desires, but vaguely, a good which she cannot as yet properly understand. Indeed, that she may long for a true "salvation," she must feel the smart and pain of sin. Hence the kind but firm probing that follows. And she feels it, and winces at the pain, parrying His questioning, and turning for escape to what seems a foreign subject—the question as to the true locality for worship. But He will not thus let His dealings with this woman's conscience be turned aside. True worship, He tells her, is not a question of here or there, as though the place and the outward form were everything ; it is paramountly a question of the worshipper, and the shrine is man's own spirit, and the worship itself is the heavenward expression and aroma of *truth*. Only those who are true then, true to God's own thought and meaning for their life—not false to its sacred ideals, as this woman was—can truly worship God ; but they can, they must, worship Him, in whom alone their life is true, anywhere and always.

Oh, if only that Messiah would come, whom her people as well as the Jews were looking for—the latter indeed expecting Him as a King, but the former more as a Prophet of truth—He would declare all these things! And in her heart she says also, “*He would help me to be true.*” She may, she shall be true: He tells her, “I am He.”

Thus our Lord, in what seemed a casual conversation by the well of Samaria, has set forth, once for all, the essential nature of salvation, as both a gift from God to man and man's true response to God. The love of God, like living water, allays the unrest of man's sense of sin, and cleanses away the sin itself, refreshing the soul, and satisfying its desires with perfect good; and the grateful love of man mounts upward to its source in the pure, spontaneous devotion which is the true worship of the true God. “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John iv. 19).

CHRIST AND THE SAMARITANS.

JOHN iv. 27-42.

THE conversation has reached its climax in a declaration such as our Lord hardly ever made in speaking to the Jews. For their thoughts of the Messiah were so coloured with political expectations, that to make such a declaration to them would have been tantamount to inviting a revolution. Therefore for the most part He confines Himself to spiritual teaching, that shall contain in itself the intrinsic truth of His Messiahship, while avoiding the formulation of it in words which would be misunderstood and perverted. But among the Samaritans there was not the same need for this reserve.

1. Just now the disciples arrive. And how amazed, if not shocked, they are to find Him so earnestly conversing with a woman! "A rabbinical prejudice prevailed, to the effect that woman is not capable of profound religious instruction: 'Do not prolong conversation with a woman; let no one converse with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife; rather burn the sayings of the law than teach them

to women.'” * “The Oriental contempt for woman appears with special strength in the rabbins : ‘ No man salutes a woman ’ ; ‘ He who instructs his daughter in the law is as one who plays the fool.’ ” † But the great Emancipator of the world has come, and all tyrannies that have lorded it over men and women shall be broken now ; Jesus therefore, in this conversation as in all His ministry, quietly ignores such foolish and wicked prejudices, and thus, far more effectually than by open and loud opposition, sets them for ever aside.

2. There is a reverential timidity (as in xxi. 12) which keeps back the disciples from any expression of their feelings—save so far as it showed itself in their looks of wonder—but they do press upon Him the refreshment which they have brought from the town. Jesus, however, like the woman, is heedless now of His bodily necessities ; the great spiritual questions that have been raised in His converse with her absorb all His interest, even as they have sent her away to testify to her fellow townsmen of One who declares Himself the Christ. And incidentally we may learn the true principle of fasting, as here exemplified : those that are for the time

* Godet's Commentary, *in loc.*

† Tholuck's Commentary, *in loc.*

in great concern for the spiritual interests of themselves or others will have no heart for the commoner satisfactions of life, and will be oblivious of its lesser needs. But the disciples do not as yet share in the intense spiritual feeling of the occasion, and, misunderstanding our Lord's words as the woman herself had just now done (ver. 11), they begin to wonder whether any one has anticipated them in providing Him with food.

3. In answer to this wonderment of theirs the Master speaks the great words that should be the motto henceforth for all His followers : " My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." These words are so unspeakably significant, both for His own life and for what He means ours to be, that we must try to gather up their meaning. That our Lord's was a busy life goes without saying—so busy, that often He " had no leisure so much as to eat " (Mark vi. 31) ; and that sometimes He had not " where to lay His head " (Luke ix. 58), not merely as being occasionally turned away from the shelter that He sought, but because the necessities of His work so pressed upon His soul that He had no time to sleep, but, while others were sleeping, He was alone with God in prayer. For the work was God's work, and

to Him He unvaryingly referred His mission with all its involved activity : "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing" (v. 19) ; and, "The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me" (xiv. 24). How does it consist with this that one main element of His work was *His presentation of Himself*, as in ver. 26 ? (See also v. 39, 40 ; vi. 35, 41, 48, and *passim* ; vii. 37 ; viii. 12 ; x. 11, 14 ; xi. 25 ; xii. 32 ; xiv. 6 ; xv. 1 ; xvi. 23, 33, etc.) The answer is that He and the Father were one (x. 30) ; He was not some one separate from God, but the manifestation of God Himself. Thus, as we are beholding the power, the patience, and the pure, true love that were manifest in all His life, we hear Him say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (xiv. 9). This work for God, then, was the supreme satisfaction of His soul : "My meat." Some other salient illustrations of this fact occur readily as we glance along His life. As a boy of twelve He had asked, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business ?" (Luke ii. 49 ;) in the desert He declared to the tempter, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word . . . of God" (Matt. iv. 4) ; towards the close, when He had "steadfastly set His face" toward the cross (Luke ix. 51), He

said wistfully, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50;) and with what satisfaction did He say, in His last prayer, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having finished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (xvii. 4), and yet more solemnly, on the cross, "It is finished" (xix. 30)! Yes; it was this that was meat to His soul, that gave Him joy and made Him strong: He was working the works of God that sent Him. And if the disciples would share His satisfaction, they must learn His secret (ix. 4, R.V.). Then their life, like His, when it is ended here, will be not only "finished" in the sense of having reached its termination, but, whether long or short, it will be fulfilled.

4. What was the special work, however, that now made the Master's heart so glad? It was the bringing of these Samaritans to God. For even as He spoke they were flocking from the village to Him and His disciples, ready themselves to be disciples. The woman, whose message to the men (vers. 28, 29) showed, more clearly than she had cared to own at the time, how His words had searched her conscience and at the same time awoke her longings for salvation, has found the way by her testimony to their consciences also, and they are longing to

see the Christ. What a harvest to be garnered ! And, though the disciples have had nothing to do with the sowing, they shall join Him in the reaping. For such is the richness of this soil, that already, without such interval as nature demands, and as is generally demanded in spiritual husbandry also, there may be, from the seed sown but a moment ago, the harvest unto eternal life ! And the harvest is gathered. The Samaritans believe, not because of any signs (ii. 23 and iv. 45), not merely now through the testimony of another, but “we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

“They that sow . . . *shall reap*” (Psalm cxxvi. 5, 6) ; therefore “let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season *we* shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. vi. 9).

CHRIST AND THE NOBLEMAN.

JOHN iv. 43-54.

AFTER the surprising success of His unintended work in Samaria, our Lord went on with His disciples to Galilee. Here He met with some sort of welcome, but the welcome of a lower faith : they “received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast” (see ii. 23-25). And what aggravated the unbelief of the Galilæans was the fact that even such welcome as they gave Him because of His miracles in Jerusalem was in spite of His being Himself a Galilæan ; for that they had seen the beauty of His sinless life unfolding year by year at Nazareth was as nothing to them, and He had therefore to win such a hearing as they would grudgingly give to one of themselves by His partial success afar off.

Even such welcome as He may hope to find now in “His own country” must be looked for, at first, at any rate, in places where He already has some influence—as at Cana, “where He made the water wine,” and at Capernaum, which was the home of some of His friends and

followers. And the little narrative that brings these two places together with its incidents affords us a short history of the genesis and growth of faith.

1. "A certain nobleman" (or, king's officer : R.V., margin) of Capernaum, who had heard of Christ and of His return to Galilee, was driven to Him by a great sorrow. We know not how much thought, or how much belief, there had been before ; but now the thought became most serious, and the belief, such as it was, was driven into action. This Jesus might save the child : otherwise his son must die, and he be left desolate. So his faith is the faith of a last resort. And how often our regard for God, our belief in God, would have hardly an existence but for the shock of some great trouble which startles them into life, and hardly any continuance of vitality but for the continued discipline of pain ! Thus God graciously condescends to our infirmity, and provides just the discipline that we need.

2. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe" : thus does He test the feeble faith of His suitor at the same time that He partly rebukes it. Did He not indeed continually test the people with His questions and sayings ? And how often they failed to abide the test, and their weak faith came out of the

scrutiny showing even weaker than before ! But the stress of the danger helps this man's faith to struggle into strength, as his passionate pleading will allow of no other thought than this—his son is dying, and Jesus may, yes, can, yea, surely will, save him ! For he is face to face with One whose very tones, whose very looks, betoken saving love and power. So, when trouble almost forces us into that same strong, gracious Presence, how the faith, that was erst so feeble and timid, learns to cling, even with passionate tenacity, to the “strong Son of God” !

3. “Thy son liveth”—oh, what a word ! And a word so self-evidencing in its truth and power that the stricken and pleading father could not but believe. So he goes his way, believing, hoping, fearing, and hoping and believing again. Thus God gives us, not only the discipline of sorrow to bring us to faith, but the discipline of suspense also, to bring our faith to its perfect strength ; and therefore with the promise there is the waiting, and often the seeming impossibility of fulfilment.

4. “Thy son liveth”—so say the servants now ; and thus the fact at last answers to the promise, and faith is made perfect. But there is a process even here ; for when the welcome fact is made known to him, it seems at first out of the question

to suppose that there is more meant than the beginning of recovery. When did the boy *begin* to mend? No; at the very moment when the Healer spoke "the fever *left* him."

5. "Himself believed, and his whole house": so, whereas the first miracle at Cana led to the brighter and happier beginning of the new home-life of those to whose marriage Jesus came, this second miracle leads to the renewed and holy home-life of those who thus believed, and who constituted perhaps the first complete Christian household in history.

Let the progress of our life be "from faith unto faith" (Rom. i. 17); and so shall every event of it own Christ's power, all that is really evil leaving us at His word, and His goodness and mercy following us all our days.

THE DEAD SHALL LIVE.

JOHN v. 1-29.

THE earlier verses of this chapter describe a miracle which is not only illustrative of the great truths enunciated in the subsequent controversy with the Jews, as showing forth something both of the quickening and of the judging power of the Son of Man, but likewise a way-mark in our Lord's life-controversy with the Jews. For, as Westcott points out,* "the whole controversy is gathered round three miracles: (1) the healing of the impotent man at Bethesda (v.); (2) the healing of the man born blind (ix.); (3) the raising of Lazarus (xi)." Thus the light of His pure, true goodness irritated and incensed their evil nature, which being brought to bay fought fiercely against the light (iii. 19, 20). So they persecuted Him, ostensibly because He had done these things on the Sabbath—or, more correctly, because He was in the habit of doing thus, living a life which, at every point, cut through the meshes of

* Westcott's Commentary, *in loc.*

their false religiousness, and laid them open to rebuke.

But the Sabbath, as He reminds them, meaning originally God's rest from the actual creation of this universe, meant no cessation of activity—He worketh still. And so the Son works, like the Father. Such language, however, speaking of Himself and God as on an equality, only the more enrages them, and persecution passes into intent to kill. And it is in the face of this murderous hatred that He directs the argument that follows. “‘An admirable apology,’ says Luther, ‘which makes the matter worse.’”*

For, as He declares, not only is the Son the equal, but the very counterpart of the Father; and therefore not only works of healing, but “what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner.” Thus, “greater works than these” that have already been seen “will He show Him”; *viz.* the quickening of the dead, the judging of all men. And in these, as in all works, neither can work apart from or independently of the other: the administration of the Son is in perfect accord with the will of the Father, and the Father's will is always administered through the Son. But these two great works, quickening and judging, are in

* Tholuck's Commentary, *in loc.*

reality one ; for if He “quickeneth whom He will,” the very selection (and rejection) implies judgment.

I. THE QUICKENING THAT NOW IS.

The great declaration of verse 25 has explicit reference to the giving of life here and now, as indeed the preceding verse plainly indicates. So that it was true of the days of the Son of Man on earth, and it is true of these days, which are but the continuation of “all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was received up” (Acts i. 1, 2), that “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live.”

Thus we are once more in the midst of those great words of John’s Gospel—death and life. To understand the negative term, we must understand the positive : but who may define life ? It eludes our utmost searching, so subtle, though so real. Its presence and working we apprehend, almost unerringly ; but its nature, its Divine secret, we never comprehend. We gaze on the sun and stars ; but their splendour is not life : on oceans, rivers, and rocks ; but mighty movement and solid strength, these are not life : we watch the curious combinations of chemistry, or the magic shapings of crystalliza-

tion, or the startling manifestations of the occult electric force; but the swiftness, the secrecy, the subtlety do not mean life. Again, we look at the flower, the field, the tree—life is there; at the sportive fish, the careering bird, the agile beast—life is there; at the sparkle of the child's eye, at the boy's vivacity, at the young man's enthusiasm, at the far-reaching intelligence and busy activity of mature age—life is there. And so, as we behold the walk with God of the Christian man, we know that life—*the* life—is there.

Life, then, is something more than mere physical existence, something not explicable by merely physical laws. And yet it has its own laws, and it manifests itself in the sphere of physical existence; but its laws, its manifestations, its modes vary almost infinitely according to its diverse kinds. Man's life at the first, as now, was not simple, but manifold: he had life in himself, the life of conscious thought, emotion, and will; life in and with the creation, the life of perception, affection, and activity; and life towards God, the life of fellowship and holy love. This last is "the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. vi. 19, R.V.); and this is the life which man, by his sin, has lost. So in the deepest, darkest sense man is dead. And this death, sooner or later, brings all others in its train.

Such, then, is man unredeemed, dead while he lives (1 Tim. v. 6). But man is not unredeemed, for He who is the Life has come into the world that dead men may have life again. May—not must ; for “they that hear shall live.” In one sense many hear, *viz.* all to whom the message of the gospel comes ; but only some of the many truly hearken, *viz.* those who thankfully receive the gospel, and live by it. Man may keep his heart closed, or open it out in faith, to Christ ; all have power to hear effectually, but only some use the power. So it is said, “He that heareth My word, and believeth”—for to hear effectually is faith.

What follows ? Life. We have seen what the life is which is lost. And faith is but the appropriation of the lost life, offered to us again in Christ. For faith, as such, is but the proper action of man’s Godward nature ; in its development it is the living, moving, and having our being in God. And the distinctive Christian faith is the proper action of our nature towards God in Christ—the laying hold of the gift of God, the attachment of the soul to Him who is the Life, and thus the participation with Him in loving, holy fellowship with God.

Such life is of necessity in itself eternal ; for He who has “life in Himself,” as of primal

right, lives for ever, and He will never cast off those who have found their life in Him. But though the life abides, if we abide in Him, and though He will not, cannot put us away from the fellowship of His love, yet we may take ourselves away, and so be dead again. And those who refuse Him, as we have already seen they may, they abide in death! Indeed, they not only remain in their first condemnation, but they incur this added guilt of rejecting the true life (see iii. 18, 19). Thus He who is the Life, passing among dead souls, and drawing or repelling, *i.e.* quickening them or leaving them more dead, does virtually judge them (vers. 22, 27). And this Holy Love is among us now, thoroughly purging His floor. "The hour now is!"

II. THE QUICKENING THAT SHALL BE.

But another hour is coming. It is matter of sad experience that many of sin's results last after sin itself is conquered. The great death works itself out, in its subordinate aspects, in spite of the great redemption. Man, while living still to God, dies at last to this fellowship of human kind, and ceases to belong to this outer, active world. Shall death, however, even in these its lesser ravages, have the last victory? Is sin, thus far, to have permanent results? And

shall the new quickening principle be therefore more limited in its range than the old destroying principle? Or, beginning in man's inmost, spiritual nature, and giving new life there (see Rom. viii. 10), shall it not, to the very circumference of his being, work out the conquest of the new life (see Rom. viii. 11)? Yes, even to the farthest limits of related creaturely existence, these victories shall be won (Rom. viii. 18-21). But we wait for them yet (Rom. viii. 22, 23); we are saved, in these respects, only "by hope" as yet (Rom. viii. 24, 25).

This hope, however, is "sure and certain," for it is "according to His promise" (2 Pet. iii. 13); nay, more, it is because we have already experienced "the power of an endless life" (Heb. vii. 17), believing in Him. So we look forward joyfully, and to our eager vision it is as though already the fulfilment were at hand: "the hour cometh!" "For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry" (Heb. x. 37); and the voice that now speaks shall speak with its full power, there shall be the complete "regeneration" (Matt. xix. 28), the "restoration of all things" (Acts iii. 21), and thus "shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. xv. 54)!

And shall all live? "All that are in the tombs shall come forth." Not, however, that all shall rise alike; for while some shall live again to live truly, and in all the amplitude of their being, others shall but live to die. Thus, while the first quickening involves judgment, the second involves the results of judgment. But in both cases the human and the Divine will are inseparably one: we choose life or death; He gives life or death.

THE REJECTED TESTIMONY.

JOHN v. 30-47.

THE thirtieth verse is at once a summing up of the previous argument, and a transition to the argument that follows. Christ has already declared (ver. 19), "The Son can do nothing of Himself," *i.e.* independently of the Father, inasmuch as He is essentially one with the Father; and with the same meaning He now says, "I can of Myself do nothing," or, in other words, the judgment which He exercises among men is not a private judgment of His own, but is in exact accord with the will of God. Does not this stupendous assertion, however, itself need proving? How shall *they* judge whether or not it be true?

Now He will not rest the truth of it on His own bare authority; though His witness alone, if it were only appreciated at its full value, is enough (see viii. 14). But, supposing it for the moment to be, as it might seem to them, a private witness such as any ordinary man might bear concerning himself, then He will allow that it must not be taken as sufficient. Therefore

He proceeds to remind them of the testimony to His character and mission which is readily available, and to charge them with the guilt of rejecting this testimony.

I. THE DIVINE TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.

“It is another that beareth witness of Me”; and One whose witness is indubitably true. Hearing this, the Jews might easily suppose that He referred to the testimony of His great forerunner, John the Baptist. But no; for, though he bore his witness courageously and well, it is not on his word that the Christ Himself will rest His claims. A Divine mission must be attested by indubitable Divine credentials. Therefore, although for the sake of their salvation He would be glad for the Jews to believe in Him, if only through the testimony of John, yet there is a twofold Divine testimony, to which they all ought to give heed, and which surely should make their unbelief impossible.

1. First, there is the direct testimony of Christ’s works. And these, not miracles merely, “but *the Messianic works generally*, the several acts of the Messiah’s entire work. ‘Works’ are always *deeds*, not word and teachings; but what the word of Jesus *effected*, spiritual quickening (ver. 21), separation, enlightenment, and so on,

and in like manner the resurrection of the dead and judgment (vers. 28, 29), are included *in* the works, and constitute His 'work' as a whole." * Not long afterwards, when the Baptist himself sent the desponding and doubting message from his prison, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" our Lord in His reply directed his attention to the works that He was doing among the people: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them" (Matt. xi. 2-5). And at the close of His life, speaking of the unbelief of the Jews, He said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (xv. 24). For His works, to say nothing of the Divine power which they implied as attendant on His mission, were so manifestly works of Divine love, that to reject them was to reject God.

2. Again, there was the indirect testimony of God's word. This was indeed direct enough in itself, bearing witness, from beginning to end, to the fact that God would provide redemption for His people; but more or less indirect in its

* Meyer's Commentary, *in loc.*

application to Jesus, as Himself the appointed Redeemer of the race. Not that it was any the less conclusive on that account; for the whole spirit and purport, of law and prophecy, indicated that just such a work was needed, and just such a work should be done, as He came actually doing among men, while in addition there were certain utterances, of more specific character, which might easily have been found to be fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Thus the Scriptures, in many ways, but in every part, bore witness of Him, and had they received the witness, eternal life was theirs.

II. THE REJECTION OF THE TESTIMONY.

This twofold testimony, however, of "the works which the Father" gave Him "to accomplish," and of the words which the Father had spoken before, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, concerning Him, they had rejected, and were rejecting still.

1. They rejected the word of God, although so priding themselves on its possession, and making such elaborate study of its outward form and minute arrangement. For this was the "searching" of the Scriptures in which they indulged—of the letter, not of the spirit. And, idolizing the letter, they missed the spirit; professing to

receive the Scriptures as God's word, they certainly had not that word abiding in them, conveying its inner meaning to their hearts, or they could not possibly have disbelieved in Him who came fulfilling it to the uttermost. Nor could they have had any true idea of the "eternal life" which they thought the possession of the Scriptures involved, or they would have been quick to discern that such life was in His gift (vi. 68).

2. They rejected likewise the testimony of His works, although they were so manifestly "wrought in God" (iii. 21). But how could it be otherwise? "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8); if the "eye be single," the "whole body shall be full of light" (Matt. vi. 22). And it is the love of God, dwelling in the heart, that makes it pure, and gives the discernment of that which is divinely good; it is this love that keeps the eye single, so that, with no perversion of unworthy motive, it beholds clearly the good intent and good deeds of others. They, however, had not the love of God in them; their eye was not single, seeking glory as they did one of another. And so they could receive only such as were likeminded with themselves, such as came in their own name and sought their own glory.

But Jesus, coming in the Father's name, doing manifestly God's will, Him they received not.

Indeed, even the testimony of John, which they had partly believed, portending the advent of "the kingdom," a kingdom which, as they regarded it, would be the culmination of their carnal hopes, the fulfilment of their worldly pride—this testimony, thus believed with a perverting faith, had wrought an altogether wrong result in them ; for they rejoiced, instead of mourning for their sins (ver. 35), and they disported themselves, like silly moths, in the mere splendour of "the burning and shining lamp," instead of finding by its light the way to Christ.

They were thus palpably liable to judgment for their unbelief, inasmuch as abundant testimony had been afforded them, and this testimony they had either overtly rejected or grossly abused. But it was not for Jesus to accuse them ; the very Moses whose name was their talisman of safety and watchword of pride, he was their accuser. For they could have had no real faith in Moses and his mission, or they must surely have received Him of whom Moses wrote and spoke—Jesus, who fulfilled the law and the prophets. So that their professed faith convicted them of the most grievous want of faith ; their very religion itself was their condemnation.

WORKS OF LOVE.

JOHN vi. 1-21.

“ **A**FTER these things ”—but not immediately after (see note on v. 1), for a considerable and important part of His ministry in Galilee had intervened. And from the accounts of the other evangelists we learn that there was just now a concurrence of motives prompting His withdrawal to the other side of the lake. John the Baptist had lately been beheaded by Herod (Matt. xiv. 13), and Herod was now seeking Jesus (Luke ix. 9); the twelve apostles had returned from their first mission (Mark vi. 30, Luke ix. 10); and both for Himself and for them a season of rest was necessary, away, if possible, from the thronging multitudes (Mark vi. 31): so, that they might find rest and consult together concerning the work of the kingdom, and at the same time be in safety from the designs of the king and the plots of the priests, Jesus takes His disciples across the sea. But the design is frustrated, for “a great multitude followed Him”; and when He had reached the hill-country, the quiet and solitary place where they were to rest

and talk and pray, not only the crowd that had followed, but another "great multitude" (ver. 5) of pilgrims to the feast, came thronging about Him, so that repose and converse and prayer must give way once more to busy and exhausting work. And thus we are introduced to the two great miracles here recorded, both on a large scale and fraught with large significance to the disciples and to the world.

I. THE FEEDING OF THE PEOPLE.

In the supplementary narratives we are told concerning the first great multitude that John mentions, "they followed Him on foot from the cities" (Matt. xiv. 13); "they ran there together on foot from all the cities" (Mark vi. 33). Such was the excitement which His ministry in Galilee had aroused. But such popularity is not always a safe test of the good that is being done. Jesus indeed had ministered, and was ministering, to their needs (ver. 2); but possibly the people only selfishly sought for the continuance of such relief, instead of discerning, by these tokens, who and what He really was, and seeking then for the supply of their deeper spiritual necessities.

But their very ignorance moves His compassion (Matt. xiv. 14, Mark vi. 34), and He both

heals their sick and teaches them concerning the kingdom of God (Luke ix. 11); and this not grudgingly, but with words of affectionate welcome (*ibid.*).

When the work of the day was done, and He sat with His disciples taking reluctant rest, He saw that the multitude still increased, and they all were toil-worn and hungry. Is He not, as it were, their Host? shall He not therefore feed them—the Shepherd, caring in all things for His flock? and especially, as perhaps He dare not go Himself to this passover feast, shall He not, as by anticipation, celebrate a true pass-over here in the wilderness?

Thus, then, testing first the faith of Philip, and through him the faith of the other disciples, Jesus causes the people to sit down, and right royally He dispenses to them His bounty, accompanied, we may well think, with such words of prayer and blessing as He hopes may make them think of “the meat which abideth unto eternal life” (ver. 27).

II. THE STAYING OF THE STORM.

But now the history narrows. For the people, already predisposed to recognise Him as the expected King, and perhaps, as Westcott suggests, believing “that He would place Himself at the

head of a popular rising to avenge the murder" of John the Baptist,* have been stirred to great excitement by His manifestation of power, so closely following His words concerning "the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 11); and, "perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force, to make Him king," Jesus "withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone."

Nor does He seek retirement merely to avoid these well-meant but perilous designs; for He needs that communion with the Father which was His soul's very life, and the more so that the hatred of the priestly party and the enthusiastic but unspiritual admiration of the Galilæans are more and more complicating His position and embarrassing His work.

Meanwhile, after sending His disciples away by sea, He has dismissed the multitudes (Matt. xiv. 22, 23; Mark vi. 45, 46), or "taken leave of them," as Mark puts it—for doubtless it would be with difficulty that He extricated Himself from the situation; and now He is alone with God.

But, as He prays on through the night-hours, the disciples are distressed in their rowing, wrestling with a mighty wind, that swept the lake in fury, making a seething caldron of it;

* Westcott's Commentary, *in loc.*

and while their thoughts and desires are towards Him who, had He only been with them, could have allayed their fears and brought them through their danger, His thoughts and desires are towards them, and He waits the crisis when He shall come to their help. For so, at all times, is He truly with His people in their peril; and yet often only "in the fourth watch" does He show Himself for their succour. But at last He comes, the storm is stayed, "and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going."

Thus, though utterly deprecating such kingship as the people would have thrust upon Him, and refusing to "trust Himself unto them" (ii. 24), He shows Himself, for His disciples' faith, on land and on sea, a King indeed! Yet that which He seeks the most is the kingship of their faith and love.

DRAWN OF THE FATHER.

JOHN vi. 22-46.

THE Gospel of John is pre-eminently the gospel of faith. It sets forth the great claimant on our faith, the Saviour Christ, full of grace and truth, and the twofold attitude of men towards Him, as diversely believing and disbelieving. This twofold attitude of men towards Christ is variously exhibited, variously illustrated ; but the contrasted action of belief and unbelief, as thus exhibited, runs through the whole book. And the great aim of the writer is to lead his readers to the faith in Christ which will mean for them eternal life.

We have the ever-recurring subject, then, in this chapter as in others, though presented here under such an aspect as gives it its own peculiar interest. And in the part immediately before our notice it is the origin or genesis of faith that chiefly demands our study. There are certain terms used, however, in the portrayal of the first beginnings of faith that quite carry us back for a time into an almost forgotten controversy,

and it will be convenient therefore to treat the subject negatively and positively.

I.

The words of vers. 37, 44, and 45 must have been ready weapons for the use of Calvinist disputants in former days, as on the surface they might so easily seem to mean that faith is determined wholly and solely by God, and that thus the great issues of belief and unbelief may be traced back ultimately to His eternal decrees. Indeed there were those who pushed the question farther back still, and argued, not merely that the acceptance or rejection of salvation is decreed and determined by God, but that the very Fall itself which made salvation necessary was likewise the result of Divine ordainment.

Now this is a matter which comes home first to the test of reason and conscience. Indeed it is chiefly before the moral tribunal that it must stand or fall. For, as Newman Smyth well says, "The Christian knowledge of God should restrain men from imputing to God any decrees, acts, or purposes which in the light of Christ's revelation of the righteous Father appear to be contrary to our truest moral ideas."* Can we

* Newman Smyth's "Christian Ethics," p. 475.

then rightly conceive of God's love as partial and selective, and moreover as arbitrary in its selection? This would stamp even human love as imperfect and faulty, and we dare not attribute to the Highest what would be unworthy in ourselves. Indeed, were there supposably something in the few which secures for them the Divine complacency, this would be salvation by merit; which is not really salvation at all. And when we consider that, in the case supposed, the abandoned ones, created without any wish of their own, and reprobated apart from their own will, even from eternity, are reprobated, and this, ostensibly because of the rejection of a salvation which was never meant for them—is this an idea of God which we can for a moment cherish? or is it not rather an idea which man's God-enlightened nature rejects at once?

But, as brought to the test of Scripture, how utterly does this doctrine break down! For the Bible is one perpetual reiteration of the truth, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: why will ye die?” (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) And the fault is charged home upon man himself: “Ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life” (John v. 40).

In the name of human conscience therefore, in the name of Scripture, in the name of God

Himself ("As I live, saith the Lord God," Ezek. xxxiii. 11), we must repudiate at once and for ever the bald, hard Calvinistic interpretation of these words. Even if at first sight they seem to have such significance, we know for a certainty that this they cannot really signify. Therefore we must seek for a meaning in harmony with the context and with other Scriptures, and with the eternal righteousness and love.

II.

Nor is this meaning far to seek. The crowds that surrounded Jesus had "come" to Him (vers. 5, 24); but what were the motives that actuated them? Greed (ver. 26) and carnal eagerness (ver. 30). Under the influence of these motives, however, men cannot really come to Christ as Saviour, even though they may throng about Him and press Him. If Christ be the bread of life, what but spiritual hunger can make men desire and seek spiritual food? Let man but realise his deepest craving, and come to Him who alone can satisfy the hunger of the soul—the Saviour will be self-attested then, even as the bread of this life proves itself to be true food to those that partake of it and are satisfied. But if men think to find fleshly and worldly satisfaction in Christ, they do not

really come near Him, and to them the Saviour is no Saviour at all.

How then is this inward sincerity produced? It is wrought by God. The Spirit strives with man, even with ungodly man. But never coercively. We experience God's working, but we are conscious that we can either use or nullify the influence that He graciously exerts. Thus Christ's words to the people at Capernaum, as recorded in vers. 37, 44, 45, mean that man in his natural depravity, filled with fleshly and worldly desires, would never come to Christ, for He is the direct antipodes to such a nature. And so those only will come who have allowed themselves to be rightly affected by the influence which God exerts on all. God "willeth that all men should be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4), but the scope of God's will is narrowed by man's will, and only those who yield to God are saved by God. Those therefore, in the language of this chapter, "come" to Christ, whom God the Father gives Him, or who are drawn of God; or, still further, who not only hear, but humbly learn of Him. Even these are "drawn" another way, *viz.* by their baser desires and by the attractions of an evil world; but they resist those unworthier influences, and yield to the better, the Divine. Whereas those that do not

come might come, for the Father is seeking to "draw" them likewise ; but they resist the grace of God, and allow themselves to be swayed by other motives, motives that are altogether undivine. So it is not God's will, but man's, that is the ultimate determinant of man's life or death.

Let us remember, however, that these opposite motives do not so maintain their proportion that it is equally easy at all times to choose the one as against the other. If by our evil choice we strengthen the evil influence, the Divine influence will be felt less and less, till God is gone !

PARTAKERS OF CHRIST.

JOHN vi. 47-59.

WHILE insisting so constantly on the Divine origin of faith, as produced only by the gracious influence of the Spirit of God,—although to this influence man must give his willing consent,—our Lord in this discourse at Capernaum is equally explicit and emphatic as to the nature and the results of faith. Here again, however, there are words used that may be an occasion of stumbling, even as they were to the Jews ; for only by the spiritual intuition which the Spirit of God must give can we discern aright their spiritual significance.

I. THE WORK OF FAITH.

There is a very noticeable distinction between the figures used as illustrative of faith in this and the preceding section, and an equally noticeable advance of conception in the later figure. At the outset Jesus had made use of the “coming” of the Jews, and had pointed out, with various reiteration, that to come to Him as they came was not necessarily to come in the way of

faith, and so as to find true satisfaction and spiritual life. Only a spiritual coming could issue in a spiritual result. Now, while still declaring as explicitly as before, "He that believeth hath eternal life" (ver. 47, comp. ver. 29), He goes on to illustrate this true believing by the act of appeasement of bodily hunger and thirst, and of consequent satisfaction and sustenance of the physical life, which was still vividly present to their minds from the recent experience across the sea, and which they would fain He should still provide for day by day (ver. 34).

1. Thus He now declares, in words that to these Jews must have been sufficiently startling, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." This saying strikes directly at the misbelief of the Jews, that their Messiah should come with much external sign and show, and set up a kingdom of outward splendour and power. What they needed was life for the soul, and to this end there must be a personal appropriation of Him who comes among men as "the Life" (xiv. 6): they must be "partakers of Christ" (Heb. iii. 14). And does not this same truth strike a fatal blow at those more modern misconceptions of Christ and His work which regard Him merely as teacher, example, and

helper of men? All this He is, most truly and blessedly ; but how much more than this, according to His own words, as, in the deepest and strictest sense, life of our life ! He is the bread of life, able to nourish and sustain for evermore, and faith is the eating of that bread of life, the partaking of Christ Himself as our very own for ever.

2. Had there been no sin in the world, Christ might well have been all this to men ; for, sin or no sin, the spiritual life is a dependent life, and it is difficult to think that what is so necessary, as far as we can see, in this or in any other world, for the richest and fullest life, would in any case have been withheld from men. But sin being in the world, and working death, His death alone can counteract its baleful power and annul its curse ; and before, by faith, we can appropriate His life and love, we must appropriate His death of love, humbly and thankfully accepting all the satisfaction and efficacy of His atonement. Therefore our Lord goes on to say, "Yea and the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" ; and, yet more strikingly, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves"—a change of figure, so far as the words are figurative, for now to appropriate

Christ is likened, not to the eating of bread, but to the eating and drinking of His very flesh and blood, so truly is it His very self, as set forth under these outer presentments, that we are to make our own, as life of our life. In part, however, the words have a literal application, for in the atonement for our sins He gave His very flesh and blood to death ; and, as before said, we have to begin with the recognition and acceptance of this solemn truth, believing in Christ as dying for us before we can have any true right or power to believe in Christ as living in us.

II. THE RESULT OF FAITH.

If faith be the appropriation of life, then life must be the immediate and ultimate result.

1. Life results immediately where it is immediately and consciously appropriated ; *viz.* in man's spiritual nature. And this twofoldly, as involved in the twofold regard of faith, towards the death and towards the life of Christ. Nor is there in the former any real inconsonance with the view that the whole redemption of Christ is summed up in one word, life, and that all faith is the appropriation of life. For in Christ's death His life was not undone, but rather it exercised its highest power and achieved its greatest victory. So much so, that, as Principal

Edwards finely puts it, "death itself died when it met the strong Jesus."* Thus we are told that "it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts ii. 24), for He was its Lord, not its victim; and so the Life, bowing and veiling itself, momentarily, thus lordlywise, came forth as life and victory. And to believe in such a One, the Conqueror of death and sin, is to have peace, losing utterly all sense of guilt, and strongly triumphing over all fear of death. But to believe in Him who died is thus of necessity to believe in Him who lives for ever, and who died for us only that He might live in us. So that thus believing in One who lives, in all the fulness of His power and love, as the life of His redeemed people, and appropriating, momentarily, that mighty love, we have victory over sin, strength and devotion for spiritual service, and, in and through all, the holy joy of the Divine favour and fellowship.

2. Such is the immediate result of faith, as consciously and voluntarily partaking of Christ, here and now; but there are results to be hereafter manifested, when the life, thus possessing and actuating now man's spiritual nature, shall have done its perfect work, penetrating all the domains of death, and pervading with its victory

* Sermon before Free Church Congress, Manchester, 1892.

the whole related creation. It is with this reference to the ultimate result of faith that our Lord says, so many times, of "every one that believeth," "I will raise him up at the last day" (ver. 40 ; and see vers. 39, 44, 54) ; and that the life which He gives is "eternal" (vers. 27, 47), or "for ever," as bidding defiance to the seeming triumph of death (vers. 50, 51, 58). For if we are His, and so abide, then our destinies are bound up with His destinies ; and as He lives in all the fulness of His human life and love, so shall we live, in Him and with Him, for evermore !

SPIRIT AND LIFE.

JOHN vi. 60-71.

IT is perhaps no wonder that the Jews, with their coarse and carnal notions, should have still misapprehended our Lord's words, and that just as, at a former part of the discourse, they objected to His statement that He was the bread from heaven the fact of His well-known human parentage (ver. 42), so now they should contend for the impossibility of His feeding them on His flesh (ver. 52). Nor need we much wonder that even among His disciples there were many who found the saying very hard (ver. 60). And yet how could they think that He meant it literally? It *was* impossible that He should feed the world on His actual flesh and blood. Indeed, the impossibility would be yet more manifest, when He should ascend "where He was before," being received "out of their sight" (Acts i. 9). But not only was it impossible that He should feed men on His flesh and blood; even if possible, it would be profitless. For "the flesh profiteth nothing," inasmuch as a material agency can produce only

material results ; and spiritual life can have no sustenance, therefore, from material food, even though that food were conceivably the body of the Son of Man Himself. Only spirit can quicken spirit ; and Christ's words are words of life, because they bring His living Spirit into contact with our spirit.

I.

First, then, Christ's words are words of life. This is true, more or less, of all words : they have life in them. Is this, perhaps, the secret of that strange superstition among the Chinese, which forbids their treading on paper containing any printed or written characters ?* Have they some vague idea of the life that is in words, and of the sanctity of life ? For the fact is proved by us every day. When the boy pores over some absorbing history, the days of long ago are lived again, and almost as vividly as though they were really present. When the son or daughter takes reverently from its secret place the scrap of paper containing the last trembling characters traced by the father or mother who has gone, the love of the past starts into being again, and the soul is stirred to its

* See "Conquests of the Cross," by Edwin Hodder, vol. ii., p. 63.

very depths. And when such a one as the monk Luther takes hold of that forgotten truth, "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. i. 17), and the bondage of bitter years is broken, and the liberated soul exults in God, is there not life, Divine life, in those words? Indeed, it is said of the primal, the eternal Word, "In Him was life" (John i. 4); and what is true pre-eminently of the personal Word of God is true eminently of His words, and is true, in their order and degree, of all the words of men.

II.

Again: Christ's words are words of life, because through them His Spirit and our spirits meet. This is the secret of the quickening power of all words, that they bring soul into contact with soul. Is it not this that makes the home-converse so refreshing after the toil and care of the day? Through the words that are spoken there is fellowship of souls. When those two simple sounds were uttered in the garden of the sepulchre on the resurrection morning, "Mary" and "Rabboni" (xx. 16), and the death of despair was transformed, as in a moment, into the exultancy of life, the words that were spoken had all their power because, through them, Mary found her Lord! So it is

too with written, with printed words : in themselves they are nothing, but they are conductors of life, inasmuch as through them spirit and spirit meet ; and when the words of the gospel of God's grace, whether spoken or written, give life to our souls, it is because they bring us face to face, heart to heart, with Christ, and His love, His life, are ours.

We find all this meaning in the great confession of Peter, when the Lord had asked of the Twelve, "Would ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go?" was his reply; "Thou hast words of eternal life." For he had already felt the quickening power of Christ's converse, of Christ's teaching. And how was this? "We have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God": because through the truth thus taught them they had come into living union with Him who is the Life indeed. So does He accompany His own word still with the power and saving efficacy of His living presence (Matt. xxviii. 20), and not the "corporeity" of Christ (as some speak of it), in sacrament or otherwise, but His spiritual presence, saves us.

THE EVOLUTION OF UNBELIEF.

JOHN vii. 1-36.

IT might well be said of the whole of the Gospel of John that its aim is to set forth Christ, in His most searching purity, in His most gracious love (see xx. 31), and at the same time to trace the growth of faith, with the concurrent evolution of unbelief, as thus divergently called forth by the increasing manifestation among men of His character and mission. In this chapter we have a miniature presentation of the twofold development, the section before us setting forth the evolution of unbelief in three more or less well-defined stages, as represented by Christ's brethren, the people of Jerusalem, and the Pharisees respectively.

I.

Between this and the previous chapter there is an interval presupposed of several months, from Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles, including the Galilæan activity described from Matthew xv. and Mark vii. to Matthew xvi. 12

and Mark viii. 26,* or possibly to Matthew xviii. 35 and Mark ix. 50.† Since the last visit to Jerusalem, described in chap. v., considerably more than a year had elapsed,—for He was probably unable to keep the previous Passover at Jerusalem, owing to the malice of the Pharisees,—and during this time much of His best teaching had been given, and many notable miracles had been wrought, besides what is described by John in chap. vi. The brothers of Jesus make reference to His wonderful Galilæan miracles when they urge Him to go to Jerusalem once more, and, for the sake of His disciples in that city, as well as of all those who would then be congregated in the city from other parts, to perform similar works of wonder in that centre of the religious life of the people. For, if it was His object to be known, why this policy of concealment just where it would best serve His purpose to be known? If, then, He really could do these things, let the whole world know it.

The lurking unbelief of the brothers of Jesus is implied in these words, “If Thou doest these things”—as much as to say, There is indeed no doubt that many seeming miracles have been

* Milne’s “Years and Eras of the Life of Christ,” p. 38.

† Ellicott’s New Testament Commentary, Introduction by Plumptre, p. xxxvi.

wrought ; how, or by what power, we do not profess to know. But there must be no room left for doubt, whether as to the facts or as to the power that accomplishes the facts : “ manifest Thyself to the world.” Thus their very intimacy with Jesus, growing up with Him, as they did, from the beginning in the same Nazareth home, not only had not predisposed them to belief in His Messiahship, but had probably prejudiced them unconsciously against such belief, the principle which prevailed with His fellow townsmen (iv. 44) operating yet more powerfully with those of His own household. Moreover, they doubtless cherished the same ideas with regard to the nature of the Messiah’s kingdom and the character of its accompanying signs as were held by the people generally, and hence much of His work, and more of His teaching, was perplexing and confusing to them.

“ Your time is always ready,” He replies ; for, since their aim was merely to have a great display made, as betokening the advent of a kingdom of power, they would be for precipitating the display in order that the kingdom might quickly come. Why should it not ? Such sheer power can overpower all opposition ; it need not wait for times and seasons. But His kingdom is a kingdom of truth (xviii. 36, 37), and truth

may have to wait its time, or thinking to make haste it may be making for itself more delay. Truth cannot overbear opposition, but must disarm it.

II.

The unbelief of the brothers of Jesus may be taken as representative of all unbelief that is more of the nature of mistaken opinion than of direct hostility to what is spiritual and good. Into such hostility it may develop, or it may not ; in the case of the men in question it gave place to faith (see Acts i. 14). But the unbelief manifested by some of the people at Jerusalem represents a further advance, being already tainted in part with actual enmity. Thus, as they were speculating on the reason of His absence from the feast, and contending about His character and claims, while some would have it that He was "a good Man," one whose aims were good, whether or not He might be mistaken in His methods ; others alleged, "Not so, but He leadeth the multitude astray." And when at last He made His appearance among them, going up to the temple to teach, and reminded them that, if only their hearts were right with God, they could be in no uncertainty as to the divineness of His teaching, and therefore of all His work,

asking at the same time (for the Pharisees were in the crowd) why they sought to kill Him, some answered mockingly, "Thou hast a devil : who seeketh to kill Thee?" Thus by their scorn, although as yet they had no part in the murderous designs of the Pharisees, they yet proved their growing unbelief ; for, as He Himself had just said, a heart that hungered to do God's will would infallibly discern the essential goodness of His words, whereas they were so blind to the pure beauty of the truth that they could only catch at some words that perhaps they did not fully comprehend, and fling them back derisively in His face.

III.

Some, however, did understand the meaning of Christ's words concerning those that sought His life ; for, living in Jerusalem, they knew more about the intents of the Pharisees than others from the country could know. Indeed, ever since the healing at Bethesda the Pharisees had cherished this design (v. 18), incensed because of His supposed breach of their Sabbath law, yet more because He claimed equality with God, but most of all because His essential goodness was in direct conflict with their hollow hypocrisy. And throughout this chapter their wicked pur-

pose looms large and dark (vers. 1, 19, 25, 30, 32). Such is the climax of unbelief—death to the Christ of God! For this is its essential meaning, even where the same literal deed is impossible (see Heb. vi. 6); and to this same awful development is all unbelief surely tending, however seeming innocent its guise, unless by God's mercy it give place to faith.

THE BEGINNINGS OF FAITH.

JOHN vii. 37-52.

IN the preceding section, which traces the development of unbelief, we recognise also signs of the incipient growth of faith. The people indeed were at the parting of the ways, and some took this way, others that; some henceforth believed, others disbelieved. We can see the hesitancy and wavering of their thoughts concerning Christ in such questionings as those of vers. 26, 27; and in ver. 31 we are told that in many cases this wavering opinion decided finally in His favour. It was this swaying of public opinion in favour of His claims that precipitated the hostile action of the Pharisees in sending officers to take Him (ver. 32); and it was His knowledge of their evil intent that called forth the enigmatical utterance of vers. 33, 34, as to His going where they should not be able to find Him, because thither they themselves could not come. But, however malignant may be the hatred of the Pharisees, He cannot leave the beginnings of faith unencouraged, slight and precarious as they are; and therefore,

with His heart yearning towards the people, in whom He already saw some wistfulness of desire for better things, "on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

I. THE GREAT SELF-ATTESTATION.

It is uncertain whether "the last day, the great day of the feast," was the seventh, or the supplementary eighth day, but probably the latter. The people were passing, perhaps in festal procession, as He stood looking on; and with eager desire to bless them He made this tender, this powerful appeal. Once before, to an audience of one, He had spoken of the living water, of which if a man drank he should never thirst again (iv. 10-14); now He tells the same good tidings to these thronging thousands. "The image appears to have been occasioned by the libations of water brought in a golden vessel from Siloam which were made at the time of the morning sacrifice on each of the seven days of the feast while Isaiah xii. 3 was sung. It is uncertain whether the libations were made on the eighth day. If they were not made, the

significant cessation of the striking rite on this one day of the feast would give a still more fitting occasion for the words." *

1. The people's ~~own~~ thirst shall be quenched, if they will but come to Him: this is the first and obvious meaning of His words. That they had some thirst for spiritual blessing their very presence in Jerusalem proved; for however mingled may have been their desires, however worldly in many respects their thoughts of the kingdom of God, yet they did desire God and God's kingdom, and if the religious hopes of the nation could have been obliterated, their one distinguishing characteristic would be gone. But they are seeking to satisfy their souls in ways that do not, that cannot, succeed. God's true presence is lost in the very abundance and show of the paraphernalia and ceremony of worship, and the life of God is dried up in them by the endless elaboration of their minute and barren rules of living. The truth of their holy religion does little more for their actual satisfaction than the sweet, living water of Siloam did for the golden vessel that it filled; and it does no more through them for others than the water poured from such vessel on to the altar, and wasted, as it streamed and trickled away.

* Westcott's Commentary, *in loc.*

Let the people come to Him, and God Himself shall live in them ; and we, too, thus finding God in Christ, may say :

How near to me, my God, Thou art !
Felt in the throbbing of the heart ;
Nearer than all things else to me :
Nothing is real without Thee.

2. Nor shall this satisfaction be for themselves alone ; but, just as the waters are poured out from the deep, capacious vessel in symbol of refreshment for the people, so they, being themselves replenished with holy joy in God, shall communicate this joy to those around them : being “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. v. 18), they shall likewise dispense the refreshment and life of the Spirit to other thirsty ones.

II. THE RESPONSE OF FAITH.

We have in this great self-attestation of Christ an application of the crucial principle enunciated in ver. 17 : “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself.” For, though in this, as in many other of His sayings, He spoke much about Himself, and declared that apart from Him men could not live, yet it was only of Himself as revealing God, as bringing God to men. “He that

speakeeth from himself seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh the glory of Him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him " (ver. 18). Not one word that Christ ever uttered fails to abide this test : His whole being was transfused with God ; apart from God He did nothing, He said nothing. He and the Father were One (x. 30). Now any spiritual perceptiveness in men must of necessity discern this Divine excellence in Christ, and nothing would so surely make men spiritually perceptive as the sincere desire to fulfil the will of God : therefore His teaching is at once His own test and theirs—His own, because the very character of that teaching proves Him to be no self-seeking impostor, but the Sent of God ; and theirs, because such teaching, commending itself to those, and those only, whose desires are worthy, shows clearly by its effect on the people whether their hearts are good or evil.

1. As the multitude listened, some gave evidence that His words had told on them for good : they said, " This is of a truth the prophet " ; and others, " This is the Christ." And the very contention that sprang up between them and the cavillers who were concerned chiefly about the external sign of the place of His nativity might well be for the strengthening of this

nascent faith, compelling them, as it did, to rest their assurance mainly on the intrinsic divineness of His words and work.

2. Nor was the good result confined to the multitude, for the very officers who were sent to take Him were spell-bound by His words, and returned to their masters with their mission unfulfilled. Being asked why they brought Him not, they made the significant response, "Never man so spake"; thus attesting the resistless power of His words of truth and grace, and at the same time, by that very fact, attesting their own desire and capacity for the better life.

3. The result indeed passes even beyond them—may we not say, passes through them?—to at least one of those before whom they give their testimony, thus proving already the truth of the great declaration concerning the flowing of the stream of life from one to others. For Nicodemus is in his place among the members of the council, and, though he had good cause to know the searching and yet saving power of Christ's words, he needed perhaps just this frank testimony of the officers to help his half-belief to struggle into faith. He hears it, and, hesitant and cautious as he is, he is yet no coward, and in presence of them all, though they are almost gnashing their teeth for rage as they speak their

words of bitter cursing concerning "this multitude," he remonstrates, protesting against the inequity of condemning any man unheard, unjudged. Very finely indeed does he insinuate that his fellow Pharisees, while making their boast of the law, through breaking the law are dishonouring God (see Rom. ii. 23)—breaking the law by this very inequity of which he speaks; yea, had he cared to say it, by the infamous iniquity with which our Lord Himself had charged them (ver. 19), of seeking to kill, and not in sad and solemn judgment, but in savage hate! Theirs was indeed a phantasmal judging (ver. 24), the thin veil of utterest miscreancy.

But faith and unfaith evolve together, and the meeting and clashing of them give the greater definiteness, the more decided development, to both. "Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matt. xiii. 30)—for the robust growth of the one, for the more signal manifesting and condemning of the other!

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

JOHN vii. 53 to viii. 30.

THE earlier part of the section before us, consisting of the narrative vii. 53 to viii. 11, is now generally admitted to be an interpolation, though, while no part of John's Gospel, it is recognised as an authentic tradition, and as probably of apostolic origin. Nor does it seriously interrupt the sequence of the record ; indeed, it was perhaps on account of its being in some respects illustrative of the great disputation in the midst of which it occurs, that it was originally placed in its present position.

For, as in the discussion just referred to, so here, we find Jesus and the Pharisees opposed to each other on a question of high moral and spiritual moment, they betraying by their whole behaviour a wanton indelicacy, and a callous insensitiveness to the finer issues involved in the case, which are rebuked so well by His absolute ignoring of their very presence at first, as being shocked beyond expression through their conduct,* and by the few calm, searching words

* See Stalker's "Imago Christi," pp. 301, 302 (note).

afterwards, which sent them all out, abashed and confounded ; they, moreover, through the whole transaction, seeking merely to embarrass and entangle Him, and by this unreality in dealing with so grave a case making the deep sin and shame of it their own, whereas He, by His stern rebuke of the accusers, and equally by His yearning solicitude that the uncondemned woman should “go and sin no more,” made manifest that He “is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John i. 5).

Thus then we are introduced to the second great declaration in connexion with the Feast of Tabernacles,—for the discussion occupying the remainder of the chapter was probably a resumption, some little while later, of that recorded in chap. vii.,—a declaration equally large in its scope, equally stupendous, also, in its personal assertion and claim. In these words, and more particularly as their meaning is amplified by what follows, our Lord sets forth, in contrast, the darkness of the world and the Light of life.

I. THE DARKNESS OF THE WORLD.

1. These Jews were as yet walking in darkness, and ever stumbling, because there was no light in them (xi. 10). And this was proved, first

of all, by their spiritual undiscernment. "Ye know not whence I come, or whither I go"; "ye know neither Me, nor My Father"; "ye judge after the flesh"; "ye are from beneath . . . ye are of this world"—in such words does Christ rebuke their guilty blindness. They were in bondage to their senses, not only in their common life (see vers. 7, 9*), but in the practices and aspirations of their very religion itself; and thus the spiritual vision was dulled, in some cases it was almost utterly lost. So, though His supernal goodness shone before them in all its peerless beauty, like the first fresh dawn of the morning, they did not discern the essential divineness of it; indeed, beholding it through all the mist and darkness of their own prejudice and evil lust, they thought it an ugly thing. For only "the pure in heart" can see God (Matt. v. 8); and therefore, though "God was in Christ" (2 Cor. v. 19: see xiv. 9), these impure ones, "resting upon the law, and glorying in God, and knowing His will, and approving the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and confident that they were guides of the blind, a light of them that were in darkness" (Rom. ii. 17-19)—they saw no God,

* Tholuck's Commentary, *in loc.*, on the immorality of the rabbis.

they disputed and cavilled with the Christ of God, and nothing to them was real but the world in its gloom. The light that was in them being darkness, how great was that darkness (Matt. vi. 23) !

2. The darkness should become to them by-and-by the darkness of bitter and despairing sorrow : "Ye shall *die* in your sins" (vers. 21, 24)—twice solemnly repeated. How perplexing, and at the best how painful, is the problem of the world's woe ! And to all men—to the followers as well as to the opponents of Christ, even to Himself as well as to His haters and blasphemers—to all there come pains and distresses, to all at last there comes death. But the great question is, Shall the woe and death of the world be relieved or unrelieved by the light from above ? Shall we take these things in faith, knowing

That Life is ever Lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own ? *

or shall we go to our doom in sullen, perhaps in savage, despair ? These are the alternatives ; and when at last their woes came upon them, in those awful last days of Jerusalem, then, Christless and therefore hopeless (vii. 34 ; and Luke xvii. 22), they should go to their death.

* Whittier's "Snow-Bound."

3. For they were about to put away their Christ, to kill Him out of their sight (see ver. 28); and in this deed of theirs would be exemplified the world's worst darkness of utmost sin. That they were in utter opposition to Him, their nature being carnal and worldly, and He being spiritual and Divine—this not only meant inability to discern His goodness, and consequent inability to see any Divine meaning and relief for this world's woe, but it involved the more positive antagonism of fierce and murderous hate. And thus hating—hating and seeking to destroy that which was divinest and best—they were “in the darkness, and walked in the darkness, and knew not whither they went, because the darkness had blinded their eyes” (1 John ii. 11).

II. THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

1. In the midst, then, of such darkness of this world Christ stands forth, saying, “I am the Light: he that followeth Me shall have the Light of life.” Meaning, first, that there shall be the vision of God: “for I know whence I came, and whither I go”; “My judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me”; “I am from above . . . I am not of this world.” As He Himself claims this

immediate vision of the Father, and the Father's will, so He gives to His followers the like spiritual discernment : they "have an anointing from the Holy One, and know all things" (1 John ii. 20). And this because, like Him, "they are not of the world" (xvii. 14) ; the film of sensual blindness is gone from their eyes, and they "see the heaven opened" (i. 51) and the King in His beauty.

2. Nor, when the distress and death of the world confront them, and they cannot "read the mystery right," do they cease to believe in Him who is Lord of life and death ; and the assurance of faith is the secret that relieves, if it does not yet wholly illuminate, "time's thickest gloom." Through all life's changes and seeming confusions, He says ever, "I AM" (vers. 24, 28), and their hearts are at rest in Him, the unchanging One, the fulfiller of life's true purpose for His people, the undoer of the world's worst destructions.

3. This means that they cherish His words, and respond to His love ; and thus the life of love makes light about them ever, a light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. They do always the things that please their Lord, and He that sent them is with them (ver. 29) ; thus, not only are they unhindered

from the vision of the spiritual and Divine by the gross obscurments of a life of sense, but this vision of Divine things is made keener and ampler, and shall at last be perfected, by the immortal energy of love.

“He that followeth Me”—oh, blessed word ! The Holy One, the Redeemer of men, the Lord of love, who is in heaven while on earth (iii. 13), and with the Father while among men (vers. 16, 29), and who has come among lost and sinful ones to save them, beckons us, calls us, persuades us, that we may tread the same path, share the same true life, and inherit with Him the everlasting glory !

THE LIBERTY OF TRUTH.

JOHN viii. 31-59.

THE great declaration just made had done its work: "as He spake these things, many believed on Him" (ver. 30)—believed *on Him*, the phrase signifying that their faith was the full, true, personal faith that brings salvation. They entrusted themselves to One whose work and methods as yet they could not understand, but whose truth and grace they felt and knew, and trusted utterly. There were others, however, who merely "believed Him" (ver. 31), *i.e.* with the more meagre faith that implied an inclination to accept Him as the Messiah, providing He should exhibit His Messiahship in the way that they thought right. Not Himself, then, in His own essential purity and love, did they trust, but rather their own notions, which they hoped He would exemplify and fulfil.

He, however, would fain lead them into the fuller, truer faith; and so He says, "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In all the discussion that

follows there is an amplifying, an enforcement, of the meaning of these words, and this, as before, in the way of vivid and startling contrast. The connexion of thought, moreover, is essentially the same as in the argument that occupies the former part of the chapter.

I. THE SLAVERY OF THE WORLD.

1. These Jews were in servitude to their own law, and to a false interpretation of the characteristic prophecies of their religion. The law in itself was "holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. vii. 12), but in their hands it had become "the letter" that "killeth," not "the spirit" that "giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6) ; instead of an informing light to the mind, it lay as a dead weight on all the activity of life, crushing and killing the true meaning out of it, "a yoke" on the people which neither their fathers nor they were able to bear (Acts xv. 10). And those who should have taught the people its true meaning, and made it to be spirit and life to them, only made the burden heavier still, and brought men into a worse bondage : "they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders ; but they themselves will not move them with their finger" (Matt. xxiii. 4). They were in slavery to a carnal law ; and they were

equally in slavery to a carnal hope. Their Messiah, when He should come, was to be essentially a worldly Messiah, fighting with the weapons of this world's warfare, and in His very "signs from heaven," which they so craved to see, making a display, not of spiritual worth and beauty, but of the false glamour and glory of the world. "Our father is Abraham," they said (vers. 33, 39); but of Abraham's true faith they knew nothing.

2. Thus they were in bondage to the law of death that was in the world, their hopes being all wrapped up in the things of this present life; and these things in themselves are manifestly perishable. So the very prophets of the kingdom were dead; and Abraham, their head and founder, he likewise was dead (vers. 52, 53). Was not this a degradation—to serve death?

3. But the secret of all their slavery was sin: "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin" (ver. 34), and they were committing sin, they were binding sin's chains more and more securely about themselves every day. Even as they discussed with Jesus, they were sinning still, and the very spirit they let loose in their bitter, taunting words was the spirit of manifest and flagrant sin. They were children of the wicked one (vers. 38, 44)—liars and

murderers. They hated, they blasphemed, they sought to kill (vers. 37, 40, 59)—whom? Him who spoke the truth of God (vers. 38, 40), who came to them from God (ver. 42), who Himself was Son of God (ver. 36).

II. THE FREEDOM OF CHRIST.

1. Would they only believe on Him, the truth should make them free! For it was the essential truth, the real and permanent meaning of their law and prophecies, that He came, not merely to re-emphasize, but in every sense to fulfil (Matt. v. 17). He was made a Priest, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. vii. 16); and not only did He prophesy the advent of the spiritual, the eternal kingdom, by word and work, His "signs" all signifying its divinest meaning, but He came to be Himself the spiritual, the eternal King (John xii. 14, 15; xviii. 36, 37). And the secret of the liberty that men were to find in Christ was sonship (vers. 35, 36): so long as they "were held under the rudiments of the world," they were "in bondage"—the world was their master, and God was, if anything, only Master to them, nothing more; but receiving, through faith in Christ, "the adoption of sons," they had holy and

joyous confidence toward God, crying, "Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 3-7), the law shone resplendent with the inner meaning of His will, and the prophecies of the kingdom meant that God should be all in all.

2. Now being sons in the house, they were in the house for ever (John viii. 35); for, though the relation of bondservice may cease, and the bondservant abide in the same service no longer, the relation of sonship may not cease, nor the son ever be cast out from the Father's home. The sons of God—this carries with it the involved assurance and pledge of life for evermore (ver. 51); and thus those who believe in Christ, the "I AM" of the Father's truth and love (ver. 58), God's own living affirmation to men of the fulfilment of His covenant, who lives for ever as the world's Saviour, even though He die, nay rather because He dies, they cannot perish (x. 28), "dying they shall not 'see death,'" but, because He lives, they shall live also (xiv. 19). Instead, then, of being "all their lifetime subject to bondage, through fear of death" (Heb. ii. 15), they live in Him, death's Conqueror, and are free indeed!

3. This means, however, of necessity, that they are "made free from sin" (see Rom. vi. 22): for it is to this end that they are taught the

spiritual meaning of the law, henceforth "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 2), and the spiritual significance of the kingdom of Him to whom every thought is to be brought into willing captivity (2 Cor. x. 5) ; it is this freedom from sin that their sonship effectuates, the love of the Father casting out, with quick and eager expulsion, every alien love ; and the very Messiahship of Christ, which means victory over pain and death for us, means first of all the bearing of pain and death in our behalf, that sin, the secret of pain and death, may be for ever slain.

Such, then, is the freedom with which Christ makes His people free (Gal. v. 1)—the freedom of truth, of faith, of holy love ; as opposed to the bitter bondage of the world—the bondage of sense and outward show, of hopeless sorrow and death, and of consummate sin. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty" !

WITNESS AND WORSHIP.

JOHN ix.

THIS chapter is an instance of the way in which, in the Gospel of John, the sequence of events most aptly illustrates the sequence of thought—so perfectly is the object of the evangelist accomplished, as showing faith and unfaith in their respective and conflicting movement and development, in presence of Him who is such a One that men must either believe, and love, and have life (xx. 31), or disbelieve, and hate, and die. The argument of the previous chapter deals much with light and darkness, vision and blindness; this narrative sets forth, as in acted parable, the same contrast—light and darkness, vision and blindness, of the bodily and of the spiritual nature of man.

In the previous disputations with the Jews, our Lord had spoken much of “the works which the Father hath given Me to accomplish” (v. 36: comp. vii. 21, 28, 29; viii. 16, 18, 28, 29, 38, 40, *et alibi*)—His work, whether of instruction or of action, being so manifestly good, that not to believe it to be of Divine inspiration and

ordainment was conclusively to show one's self to be not of God. Now He has occasion once more to engage in this twofold work, setting Himself with utmost intentness, by deed and speech, to recover to sight—full sight, vision of the world and vision of God—him who had been born doubly blind. For these works—“*we must work*” them, He said, while opportunity lasts: the day of opportunity, for Me here, and for you, will soon be done. So He healed the blind man of his blindness; and just as the waters of Siloam by their very name (“Sent”) were a perpetual reminder to the Jews of the water of life which God sent to them in the desert land of their wanderings, and a parable of the true water of life which He would send them in the desert land of this world's evil, how impressively, as he washed his blindness away, must they have spoken to the blind man of the healing mercy which had been “sent” to him by the Stranger, with the result that his spiritual vision was likewise restored!

Already, then, he has the beginnings of faith; and, as the faith grows and ripens, so marvelously, during his controversy with “the Jews” (*i.e.* the hostile hierarchy), and during his further converse with Jesus, it manifests itself, as all true faith must, towards the gainsayers and

towards Christ, as witness and as worship—for the faith that worships, when it turns towards men, witnesses for Him ; and the faith that witnesses, when it turns towards Christ, worships Him : the one is the necessary complement of the other.

I. WITNESS.

This is the truth so insisted on by the Apostle Paul : that to “believe with the heart unto righteousness,” while necessarily involving our worshipful fealty, in all our life, to “Jesus as Lord,” involves equally a loyal witnessing, a true “confession” before men of Him who to us is Saviour and King for ever. Only so indeed can our faith issue in “salvation”—the salvation of the whole life, thought and word and work, unto God (Rom. x. 9, 10).

The blind beggar had been healed of his blindness—of this one thing he is sure (ver. 25). And the healing had in some way come through Jesus. On this, then, he insists, first of all ; and, as they badger and bully him, their very malice and perverseness help to develop in his mind the truth, which had indeed begun to dawn upon him, though but dimly, before, that “this Man *is* from God” (vers. 16, 17, 29–33), for “the very works” that Christ did bore

witness of Him, that the Father had sent Him (v. 36).

Nor was this confession made without cost : he was before those of whom such as he might well stand in dread, the chiefs of the people ; and "they reviled him," they raged upon him, and at last "they cast him out"—which, if it was not the formal excommunication threatened to those who should thus "confess" (ver. 22), was at least its sure precursor. But the very sacrifice that he is thus called to make, by its reaction of blessing, confirms and develops yet further his nascent faith.

II. WORSHIP.

In most cases, perhaps, the faith that worships becomes the faith that witnesses ; but in this case witnessing preceded worship, the faith that made the latter possible only coming to its proper self-realisation through the former.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out"—there was then something in the man worth caring for, if it had passed through this ordeal ; "and finding him, He saith, Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?" For a Messiah, and for full faith in a Messiah, the man was prepared by his recent experience : in God, and in Jesus as sent of God, he already believed, and it needed

only that Jesus should tell him, as he told the Samaritan woman (iv. 26), "I am He," for his faith to be made perfect. "And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." So likewise with Thomas, some little while later, there was wanting only the full faith in Jesus as the Risen One, and then his faith "answered, and said, My Lord, and my God" (xx. 27, 28).

Faith witnessing bravely, faith worshipping reverently—it was worth the suffering of those long years of blindness and poverty for the nameless beggar of Jerusalem to be privileged to teach this lesson to the world ; and so, not for his own sin, nor for his parents', "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him," was this suffering allowed. And in like manner our suffering may be the Divine sign-manual of special privilege for ourselves, because of blessing to men.

THE TRUE SHEPHERD.

JOHN X. 1-21.

THE entire disputation with the Jews turned on the rights of our Lord to do as He was doing. What claims had He to assume such a position among the people? He was setting Himself forth as the one object of the people's faith and following; but was not this a self-constituted leadership? He proceeds now to answer them by an allegory, and under the figure of the true Shepherd He presents His claims as the claims of authority, of ownership, and of love.

I. THE CLAIMS OF AUTHORITY.

He had this primary right to take the people in His charge, and lead them in the way of eternal life—that He was a divinely appointed Shepherd of the sheep. By this door, then, the door of an authority which was from God, was He entering into the fold. Of this authority, indeed, He had spoken many times, telling them, with various reiteration, that God had sent Him, and that He did nothing of Himself, but all

things in absolute concurrence with the Father's will (comp., *e.g.*, v. 19, 20, 30 ; vii. 16, 18, 28, 29 ; viii. 16, 28, 38, 42) ; also, that the works which He did in the Father's name were the indisputable credentials of His authority (v. 36 ; viii. 18, 54). Now He asserts the same authority as in contrast with the illegitimacy of those actually self-constituted leaders of the people,—such as the very men now contending with Him,—who approached the people from an altogether different and alien direction (*ἀλλαχόθεν*), being indeed, as He had told them, “from beneath,” *i.e.* “of this world” (viii. 23), as actuated, not by a true desire to do the will of God, but by motives that were essentially unworthy, even if they were not in every case base and bad.

But though they gained a sort of access to the people, it was not that God opened the door to them ; on the contrary, they found their own way unlawfully, they made a way where there was none, they grasped at a power which was never given them of God. And thus their access to the people was only in superficial semblance ; for their teaching awoke no true response in the hearts of those who had any desire after God : “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers” (ver. 5). Whereas any true shepherd

would have but to speak, and the sheep would answer to the call and follow; and so it was pre-eminently of Christ, as the true Shepherd, even as the incident that had just given rise to this controversy proved, the poor blind mendicant's nature unfolding so quickly into the faith and love of God under the influence of Christ's gracious dealings. Thus the authority of the true Shepherd, He being moreover "the Chief Shepherd" of the sheep (1 Pet. v. 4), is attested by His finding true access to the hearts of all who wish to do the will of God (John vii. 17).

II. THE CLAIMS OF OWNERSHIP.

While other shepherds of "the flock of God" (1 Pet. v. 2) might be true shepherds, in their own rank and degree, as being sent of God, and be recognised as such by those to whom they were sent, yet Christ, the Chief Shepherd, has claims which no other can have—the sheep are His very own. To indicate this, there is a turn in the allegory at the seventh verse: "I am the door of the sheep." In other words, not only is He sent of God as no other has ever been sent before, having a unique and paramount authority, but in a very true sense all others only hold and exercise their commission through Him. His relation to the world, and to the world's redemp-

tion, is such that He has supremacy in all true guidance, and guardianship, and governance of men ; and whatever else of leadership, of protection, of rule there may be, it is all in subordination to Him, and for His sake. He is " the Firstborn of all creation ; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him ; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the church . . . that in all things He might have the pre-eminence " (Col. i. 15-18). The patriarchs and priests, the prophets and kings of the old time, in so far as they were true, were His fore-runners ; and the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. iv. 11) of the latter days have been His messengers and ministers.

Who, then, were all these that for generations past had assumed the office of shepherds of the flock of God—the worldly priesthood, of whom Annas and Caiaphas were heirs, and the self-righteous Pharisees, who studied the frivolous minutiae of a factitious righteousness, but were blind to the beauty of essential goodness ? Their office was self-assumed, and their work the work of the destroyer : they were " thieves and

robbers" (ver. 8). But them the sheep did not hear; there was no spiritual kinship, such that the sheep could be in any sense their own: for they were not in any true relation to the Christ of God, as was manifest when, coming at last, He was scornfully rejected of them. To this true Shepherd, however, the sheep rightfully and absolutely belong, and in His ownership they rejoice.

III. THE CLAIMS OF LOVE.

We have thus seen how the unique authority of Christ is explained by His sovereign ownership, that ownership being involved in His relation to the creation, and intensified by His relation to the redemption, of men (1 Cor. vi. 20; Titus ii. 14, R.V.). Now we come to consider how the claims of ownership are at once heightened and transfigured by the claims of love. And the characteristics of this love, as our Lord Himself here indicates them, are emphasized by contrast with the false shepherds.

1. Sympathy. "He that is a hireling . . . careth not for the sheep" (vers. 12, 13): there is no fellow-feeling, no true affection, but the relation of shepherd in this case is superficial, and in outward seeming merely—so that, in the true sense, he is "not a shepherd" at all; the

question is one of so much work for so much wages, and the sheep are only the things by which he makes his gain, and therefore objects of mere sordid interest. But the true shepherd "calleth his own sheep by name" (ver. 3)—there is acquaintance with their individual character and needs ; and thus, says Christ, "I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father" (vers. 14, 15) : *i.e.* He enters with intimate sympathy into the minutest details of their interests, because their interests and His are one.

2. Sacrifice. The hireling, when dangers threaten, lets the sheep be killed, if only he may save himself ; the thief comes and steals, on purpose that he may kill. But the Good Shepherd comes to give life, not to take it ; and He will guard the life of the sheep, even though He sacrifice His own. What claims of love are here ! "Ye were bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 20) ; "our Saviour . . . gave Himself for us" (Titus ii. 13, 14) : well may we say, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. v. 14) ; and well may He claim to be the Leader of those whom He has loved even unto death !

But He has loved and died for all, Gentiles as well as Jews ; therefore that same love, wide as

the world, must search throughout the world, till it "gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad" (John xi. 52), or, in the words of the allegory, till the sheep of the other fold are brought home from their wanderings, "and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd" (x. 16).

Such love is the counterpart of God's love. The laying down of His life is voluntary, but it is according to the Father's will; yea, according to the Father's command. Therefore for this consummate service of mankind, and in consequence for all other service, He has express Divine authority: and shall these self-seeking, false ones presume to condemn Him as an intermeddler?

Some of them are touched by the power of His words, as they had been by the power of His deeds (ix. 16); but the others are self-blinded still, and say jeeringly, "He hath a devil, and is mad." So that, while He still says of the sheep that He is willing, nay eager, to die for, if need be, "I am come that they might have life" (x. 10), to these unbelievers He still must say, with the pathos of an infinite lament, "And ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life" (v. 40).

THE CREDENTIALS OF THE CHRIST.

JOHN X. 22-42.

AFTER an interval of about two months, the events and controversies of the Feast of Tabernacles still vividly present to the minds of all, Jesus reappeared among the Jews in Jerusalem, and was at once assailed with the peremptory and menacing demand that He should declare Himself. "How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly." In reply to this demand, He once more, and more explicitly still, if possible, gives them His credentials. They are mainly twofold, His works and His words.

I. THE WORKS OF CHRIST.

Like so many others, both in politics and in religion, these Jews were the slaves of phrases and catchwords. How great is the spell of some party word in political life! The mere name of some movement, or measure, will carry the consent of multitudes by its sound alone, whereas a proposal in all essential respects the same, but emanating from another source and

stamped with a different designation, would appeal to them in vain, or even excite their hostility. The same servitude to words is exemplified in matters of religious belief. Let a doctrine be preached ever so faithfully and persistently, but not with the accustomed phrases, these phrases perhaps being avoided because they have become mere empty sounds, and there are those who cry out that the doctrine is never preached at all. Just so it was with the Jews. Had Christ come proclaiming loudly everywhere, "I am the Christ," that alone would have sufficed for numbers of them; but that He did continually among them "the works which none other did" (xv. 24), works so essentially Divine, this went for nothing, or worse than nothing.

While, however, many would have simply ignored the difference between His mode of working and their own notions of the Messiah's work, interpreting these works in their own way, or waiting for something more to their taste, but contenting themselves or the present with His verbal declarations of Messiahship, others would not have been thus satisfied, but would either have rejected Him because His works belied His words, or would have been for forcing Him into a line of action more agreeable to their own beliefs (see vi. 15). It was because of these various

dangers threatening His true success in the event of such formal pronouncement of His claims, that our Lord rarely committed Himself to any definite statement of His Messiahship, but rather did the work of the Christ, and left that work to make its own impression.

In directing their attention once more to these works of His, as His true credentials (vers. 25, 32, 38), He sums them all up on this occasion in those words of momentous import, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (ver. 28). To us frail but expectant and eager creatures, with infinite longings for a good that we only dimly discern, and that we seem fated by the conditions of this finite existence never to attain, what gift could be offered to compare with this gift of eternal life? "The two words together are meant to describe the highest end and fullest conceivable good of existence . . . life at its highest power and in its completest conceivable realisation. It is living at its highest, intensest, and fullest, in all that makes life worth living. The highest good becomes thus in one word intensely vital. It is being, moral being, personality, vitalised to the utmost."* Nor is this good an altogether far-

* Newman Smyth's "Christian Ethics," pp. 111-120.

off good, but to be begun here and perfected hereafter. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (xvii. 3)—know, with the intimate knowledge of personal love, a love that brings us into blessed fellowship with God and with one another (xiv. 20, 21, 23 ; xv. 9-12, 17 ; 1 John iv. 7-21).

When this gift is given, it is known to be real ; the pulsations of the new life make themselves felt, thrilling the soul with new and boundless joy ; and there is a sense of sweet security, in spite of all mortal change and danger, because of Him who has said, "They shall never perish." Then who is He that gives such a gift, that works such a work ? "We have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God" (vi. 68, 69).

II. THE WORDS OF CHRIST.

But to all who are thus prepared to receive His words, Christ declares who and what He is ; and even to such as have not yet "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come" (Heb. vi. 5), the mere sympathy and beneficence of His life among the people should be a sufficient commendation. Let them "believe the works," works so intrinsically good, and

bearing the stamp of God's approval in that very power of God by which alone they could be wrought, and then they should "know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (ver. 38).

For indeed His words tell the self-same message as His works : "I and the Father are One." An absolute moral oneness with God, having its roots in an essential oneness of nature, this was the supreme characteristic alike of His Person and of His mission. If, then, He was One "whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world" (ver. 36), was He not the Christ? But these words of so distinct assertion of Himself as the Sent of God, with all His other words of grace that brought God near to men, they could not hear, because they were not of God (viii. 47 : comp. vers. 26, 27).

How beautiful, in contrast with the bitter unbelief of these hostile Jews, the simple trust of the Peræans to whom He now betakes Himself, who had cherished so long the faithful testimony of the Baptist, and are now prepared to recognise in the rejected Jesus at once the Lamb of God (i. 29, 36) and the Shepherd of God's flock !

"I AM THE LIFE."

JOHN xi.

THE eleventh is in some respects the great central chapter of this Gospel of Life—even as it does indeed happen to be also literally the central chapter. The words and works of Christ have both been demonstrating hitherto, with accumulating force, that "in Him was life" (i. 4), thus leading up to the great declaration made to Martha, and consummated in the raising of her dead brother to life again ; and, after this fullest revelation of His living and lifegiving power, we have to behold Him as He proceeds to lay so wondrous a life down, that He may take it again, and so become in very truth the life of men (x. 15–18 ; xi. 51, 52).

But, as throughout the Gospel, so here, the light of life is attended by its dark shadow, death—a shadow cast by the perverse will of man ; and thus the narrative presents us with a picture, not only of life in its fairest beauty and mightiest energy, but also of death at its deadliest and worst.

I. THE LIFE OF LIFE.

Our Lord had been tarrying some time beyond Jordan, among a believing people (x. 40-42) ; and even among those of Jerusalem and its neighbourhood were some true, believing ones. There was one home in particular to which His thoughts would often turn, the home of Martha and Mary ; where He had met at first with so kind a welcome (Luke x. 38-42), and where during the last days He found nightly shelter and solace after the toil and controversy of the daytime (Luke xxi. 37, 38 : comp. viii. 1, xii. 1). The inmates of that home trusted and loved Him well. But a dark shadow fell on the Bethany household : the brother, Lazarus, sickened unto death.

And yet not "unto death" as the intended end of all, but only as a passing step towards better and fuller life, for himself, for his sisters, for the disciples, for "many of the Jews"—indeed, who can estimate the final result of "life," as enhanced and enriched through his temporary death ? The teaching of that miracle at Bethany transfigures our worst sorrows, and transfuses all our earthly experiences with a new and blessed hope.

So here, in spite of the temporary shadow, a shadow out of which neither the sisters nor the

disciples were able yet to pass (see ver. 16), we see the working of the life of faith and love, with the possibility and prospect of development into stronger, richer life, and this in spite of, nay even by means of, the seeming thwarting and bafflement occasioned by what the world knows as "death." And the life of this life was Christ; for His presence, "full of grace and truth" (i. 14), had been the inspiration of the little home-circle at Bethany, and was the abiding inspiration of the disciples, even though, on His account, they often feared, and were sometimes dismayed. Therefore He must still work while it was day (ix. 4), whether among the friendly Peræans or the hostile Judæans (ver. 7), knowing that, so long as it was the Father's will that He should be thus the life of life to men, He would walk securely, here or there (vers. 8, 9), and He and the Father should alike be glorified (ver. 4).

II. LIFE AND DEATH.

But death, though it may be put under our feet, is an enemy; though it may be but a step in the passage to life, it is one of the works of the destroyer. And there are times when, face to face with it at its worst, we see only its native awfulness and horror. So it was when Life and

Death met, looked into each other's eyes, and contended for one moment of sharp conflict, by the grave of Lazarus. Christ sees death, in the heart-broken grief and utter desolation of the sisters as, one after the other, they hurry to Him with that pathetically regretful cry, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"; He sees it still, as death, when the sisters and the Jews all wailed together, giving free vent to their distress; and yet again, as they take Him to the tomb where all their hopes seemed buried—He sees it, and shudders at its ravages, and Himself weeps. For it is not this one instance alone that overcomes Him, entirely as with His sympathy He shares the sisters' anguish, but

As I think,

To see our tears, and all those mourning folk;
And know our lamentation one salt drop
In this world's brimful sea of misery;
Bethinking how, by night and day, near, far,
Eyes stream, hearts crack, and homes are laid in waste
For terror of this secret-footed death
Which comes unseen, and slayeth silently;
And hath not answered once, though myriads ask:
"What art thou? Wilt thou give us back our dead?"
Bethinking Him of this, compassionate,
Folding all human sorrows in His heart,
Our Heavenly Master groaned in spirit; shook,
A-tremble with that vast love, gathering
Against His breast all such as weep on earth.

"Where have ye laid him?" sighed He. When I said, "Lord! come and see!" the gracious eyes were wet With tears which comfort all tears. Jesus wept.*

Yes, Death was here, in all his dreadful power; but Life met Death, in supreme, all-conquering power. And so conscious was Life of His utter victory over Death, that Death died into nothingness as Life spoke His words of promise (vers. 25, 26), and when the command was uttered he yielded up his prey (vers. 43, 44). For see how divinely royal is the assurance of victory: "*I am the Life* : he that believeth on Me, though he die,"—*i.e.* physically, like the seeming-dead Lazarus,—“yet shall he live,”—*i.e.* shall still live on in his better, truer life, a life which the physical accident of the body's death cannot so much as touch. Then why use the ugly word death at all, so ill-becoming those who have eternal life in Christ (x. 28)? Let it be dropped, He says; for “whosoever liveth and believeth on Me *shall never die*” : in other words, while those whom you call dead live still to God, of you living ones it is also true that, if your life is in Me, you have no death before you, but yours is a life so strong, so victorious, that it will pass on unhurt, untouched, through what

* “The Light of the World,” by Sir Edwin Arnold, pp. 263, 264 (by permission of Messrs. Longmans & Co.).

the world calls death, without so much as seeing it (viii. 51). Thus far the promise. And this promise, with the inner witness of the new life itself, is enough, this inner life being the most real of all realities, and this witness therefore of all witnesses the most sure. But, for the confirmation of their faith and ours, and for a testimony to the world, He will show, once and for all, that to His people life is the great reality, and death but the ghost of a defeated foe : therefore He says, " Lazarus, come forth,"—and the brother is with the sisters in this bright, sunny world again ; while surely through all graves went a sympathetic thrill, presaging victory.

III. THE DEATH OF DEATH.

But death is vanquished only where there is true belief in the Christ ; and, while He is the life of His people's life, His rejection from the soul where He seeks entrance is the death which gives all other death its power—death of death ! The death of careless, godless sin is indeed death, but a death that may yield to life at the sound of the voice of the " strong Son of God " (v. 25) ; whereas the death of bitter, wilful, defiant unbelief is a death that knows no life for evermore ! For it is true, not according to any supposed arbitrary decree of Almighty God, but according

to the intrinsic nature of things as related to the essential nature of eternal God, that "he that believeth on the Son hath eternal life ; but he that obeyeth not [*i.e.* with the activity of disbelief] . . . shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (iii. 36 : see also ix. 41).

So was it even now. For while "many of the Jews, which came to Mary and beheld that which He did, believed on Him . . . some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done." Then there was the hasty council, the consternation of the Pharisaic party,—who believed the miracle, *and yet believed not on Him*,—and the unblushing avowal of the Sadducean high priest that the best policy was to kill Him, right or wrong, "that the whole nation perish not." And truly His death should be "for the nation," and for "all the children of God" ; but, to those who thus deliberately put Him from them, His death meant utter death, not life, and by their wicked counsel they were sealing their own doom (ver. 53).

Again, then, He has to go away from His enemies, this time to the border of the Judæan desert. But "His hour" is at hand, and the advent of the Passover is as the striking of the clock, telling that all things are now ready.

THE MANIFESTED KING.

JOHN xii. 1-19.

OUR Lord had utterly withstood the attempt of the people "to make Him a king" after their own liking (vi. 15), presenting His spiritual demands in such a way as to bring Himself into the sharpest collision with their worldly hopes ; and to this policy He adhered throughout, not coming forward as a king at all ostensibly, and yet claiming in reality the kingship of hearts. Having thus, however, made His position clear, He might at the last, when the rejection of His claims to a spiritual saviourship had become final (xi. 53, 57), assert Himself explicitly as king (xviii. 37), and allow others to make the same manifestation in His behalf. By Mary He is anointed as the King of love ; by the multitude He is openly proclaimed and greeted as the expected King of Israel.

I. THE KING OF LOVE.

Having joined the company of Galilæan pilgrims, Jesus arrives at Bethany, and while there He is entertained at supper in the house of Simon the leper (Matt. xxvi. 6-13, Mark xiv.

3-9). Lazarus and his sisters are evidently friends of Simon, for not only are they fellow guests with Jesus at the feast, but Martha takes part in the serving (see Luke x. 40 ; and note on xi. 20). Still true, however, to the instincts of her disposition, while Martha shows her devotion by such practical "service" as was congenial to her, Mary must express, in some more emotional and significant way, the love which, full before, is full to overflowing with that last great evidence and pledge of the Master's love for them—involving, as perhaps she knew too well, His final condemnation by the council, and prospective death.

Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And He that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.*

It was customary to anoint the head of one whom they wished to honour (see Luke vii. 46 ;

* Tennyson's "In Memoriam," xxxii. (by permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co.).

and Matt. xxvi. 7, Mark xiv. 3) ; but Mary's own humility and deep devotion alike prompt, not only to the anointing of the head, but also to the lavish pouring out of the precious "pistic nard" (see Mark xiv. 3, R.V., margin) on the Saviour's feet. "And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment": so, too, as our Lord foretold, has the whole world been filled with the fragrance of that act of love.

But suspicion and hate are lurking there, to mar the beauty of the anointing of the King of love. "Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, which should betray Him, saith, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? . . . *because he was a thief*, and having the bag took away what was put therein." A base traitor already to the little band who made him their purveyor and almoner, and to the poor whose cause he thus hypocritically espoused, he was preparing for that consummate act of treachery with which his name will be indissolubly linked so long as the world lasts ; and thus his base, malignant spirit—dark as the darkest outer night (xiii. 30)—serves only too effectually to throw into relief the utter, white-souled devotion of her whose deed "shall be spoken of for a memorial . . . throughout the whole world" to the end of time.

Another contrast follows. "The common people of the Jews," being attracted by the report that Jesus, and Lazarus "whom He had raised from the dead," were sitting together in the house of Simon, came thither, that they might have ocular evidence of the reality of that wondrous resurrection: and they "believed on Jesus," thus participating, so to speak, by their faith, in the anointing of the King; whereas, because of their very faith, "the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death," and when Judas went straightway to them (Matt. xxvi. 14, Mark xiv. 10), offering to sell His Master, as well as his own soul, for gold, they "covenanted" with him (Luke xxii. 5) in his deed of shame. Thus was the Light of the world drawing to itself the children of light (vers. 35, 36), and driving into their deeper, chosen gloom the children of darkness (iii. 19-21).

II. THE KING OF ISRAEL.

The way is prepared, by the belief of the people who "went away" convinced and wonder-struck by what they had seen in the house of Simon (ver. 11), for the transition from the spontaneous homage of grateful love in that more private circle to the deliberate, open, and

explicit acknowledgment of His kingship by the crowds who, "on the morrow . . . when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried out, Hosanna : Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." At last, surely, the kingdom of their fathers' hopes had fully come, and He who raised the dead to life was the indisputable King.

Such was the homage of the "great multitude"—a double multitude, in part Galilæans, and others, who had come to the feast, and in part "the Jews" (ver. 11) who bore testimony to the calling of Lazarus from the tomb (vers. 17, 18)—in token that, despite the commandment of "the chief priests and the Pharisees" (xi. 57), they were determined to recognise and hail the advent of the King to the kingly city. Jesus allows their homage, and at the same time He seeks to guard against a misinterpretation which would mean the undoing of all His work, by coming into Jerusalem, not like a kingly leader of armies, or with pomp of worldly show, but, as Zechariah had foretold, "lowly, and riding upon an ass"; with the intent, by His word of "peace," to "cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle

bow"—in other words, to rebuke the spirit of pride and vainglory, which had perverted the very promise of the world's Christ into a false, carnal hope and badge of bigotry, and, as "having salvation," and this even for "the heathen," to win a "dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zech. ix. 9, 10), not by conquering might, as of this world, but as King of the hearts of men.

Was it not, then, by another of their unconscious prophecies of truth (see xi. 51, 52), that His enemies exclaimed bitterly, "Behold how ye prevail nothing: lo, the world is gone after Him" (ver. 19)?

THROUGH DEATH TO LIFE.

JOHN xii. 20-32.

THE royal entry into Jerusalem was on Sunday ; on Monday was the second cleansing of the temple, and on Tuesday followed the last controversy with His enemies, as recorded in Matthew xxi. 20 to xxiii. 39 (see also Mark xi. 20 to xii. 44, and Luke xx. 1 to xxi. 4).^{*} The coming of the Greeks, saying, " We would see Jesus," reported to Him by Andrew and Philip, turned the current of the controversy, and led to the final words of warning, reported in this chapter, vers. 35, 36. But that advent of the Gentile strangers, so friendly and respectful, thrilled the soul of Christ with solemn joy. For how it contrasted with the bigotry and sneering malice of His foes ! And was it not likewise a token that the great world beyond Judæa and Galilee was feeling after its own Saviour and Lord, and that the rejected of the Jews would be the accepted of the Gentiles ? So to Him it was a prophecy and pledge of universal victory ; indeed, it was almost like the striking of the

^{*} Milne's " Life of Christ," pp. 50, 51.

clock, announcing, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." Thus, for the instant, His thoughts overleap the interval of rejection, shame, and death, and the vista of the victorious and glorious future opens out to view. But only for an instant ; for a dark shadow passes over the fair picture of the faith and love of the coming ages, as He bethinks Him what is the price that must be paid for this triumph, and that the paying of that awful price is demanded now. There can be no exemption ; the law is universal and inexorable : and He reminds Himself and His disciples of all its solemn but glad significance, as He says, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (ver. 24). In these words He tells how even nature has its prognostications of the great law of sacrifice ; in the following words (vers. 25, 26) He warns His disciples, and us, that man can only gain his life by losing it ; and in the significant words respecting His own approaching end (ver. 32) He declares that in His case pre-eminently the law of sacrifice is the law of gain, that the seeming shameful end is therefore not the end, that rather the way and passage of His victorious kingship is through death to life.

I. THE LAW OF THE LIFE OF NATURE.

How true it is, as our Lord reminds us, that all nature teems with symbolic hints and prophecies of the law of sacrifice ! We look around us with delight and wonder at the new life and beauty of the world, when the bounding pulsations of the spring-tide are upon it, and the signs of quickening energy are evident everywhere. But whence comes the beauty, and whence the seemingly inexhaustible vitality of nature, as it thus renews its youth ? From the cold and barren deadness of the winter-time ; and had there been no death first, there could not have been this multiplied, this abounding life. In what spot of the woodlands does the young tree mount up with strongest and quickest growth towards the sunny skies ? Where there has been the deepest and richest soil of decay and death, into which it strikes its thirsty roots, and from which it draws the nutriment of vigorous life. Whence comes that beautiful, fairy-like thing that flutters over our gardens in the summer-time, the light, tremulous, buoyant butterfly ? From the dead-seeming chrysalis.

This then is the law. How, why, whence it is, we know not ; but the fact we know, that the great law of sacrifice has stamped its impress

on the world of nature almost everywhere. The higher and better is gained by the sacrifice, the death, of the lower. For, to use Christ's own illustration, the very bread of our daily life we owe to death. The grains of wheat, if we keep them as they are, will remain as they are, limited and few ; only as we let them fall into the ground to die, can we have the yield of the abundant harvest.

II. THE LAW OF HUMAN LIFE.

As with nature, so with human life ; so especially with the Christian life.

1. Of what may be called, by distinction, the natural life of man, it is true that "he that loveth his life loseth it"—if it were possible, indeed, to arrest effectually our natural development for the sake of clinging to the good we have. For thus we should be robbing ourselves of the higher good that the development of our natural life would bring. In every stage of the individual life, and equally in every stage of the history of a nation, or of mankind, there is much which, though it is beautiful, and even precious, is of necessity transient, and has to give way for something fuller and richer ; and the gain can only come by this sacrifice. The bright, gleeful days of childhood, the strong, hopeful

days of youth, must pass away, if there is to be the maturity of manhood. Just so the romance of a nation's youth must be let go, if the nation is to reach the sobriety and solid strength of fuller life. And in like manner, as the world advances in civilisation, while much is gained, much also is lost, and to a great extent the loss is the necessary condition of the gain; the way of the world's human history, like the way of nature, is through death to life. May we not indeed follow the law further, in this its natural working? There is the law of sacrifice, the law of life through death, accompanying us in our individual history to the very brink of the grave: shall it cease working there? shall its last word be death—the condition, the means, the way? or are we not almost compelled, apart from any “more sure word of prophecy,” to assume that here also loss means gain, death means life—in other words, that the grave itself holds the mystery of resurrection? And what of the world's future? “The heavens shall pass away, and the earth shall be burned up. But we look for new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet. iii. 10, 13). Thus, in man's own history, and in the world's history, though there may come at last decay, dissolution, destruction, yet out of the destruction shall spring a new exis-

tence, out of the decay and dissolution a more abundant glory shall be born.

2. Our Lord's words apply, however, more especially to the spiritual life of man. And to us this teaching is now so familiar that it will be accepted without dispute. What is the great principle of the new birth but this law of sacrifice—through death to life? "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death: that . . . we might walk in newness of life. . . . Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi. 3, 4, 11). In like manner, the paramount principle of the Christian's devotion to God involves the working of the same law; for, that we may truly do His will, we must hold everything else, however good and desirable in itself, in subordination to the demands of His service, sacrificing thus the lower joy that we may win the higher, yielding the benefit of lesser worth that we may gain the blessing of priceless worth (see Mark x. 29, 30). And, as closely connected with this latter principle of the subordination of all else to God, is the subordination of the present to the eternal future. If we treat this life as an end in itself, and

desire to absorb ourselves in present interests, even the present becomes shorn of its best glory, as the preparation for the future, and life has sentence of death in itself, unless it be lived with continual reference to a fuller life. The true "glory" of life is "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen . . . the things which are eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

III. THE LAW OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

In Him who is "the Firstborn of all creation," and must in all things "have the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 15, 18), we should expect to find the law of sacrifice working at its highest power; and it is even so. The example from the world of nature is taken to explain and enforce this mystery of His own life and work; and the working of the law in the lives of His followers is asserted with express reference to Himself (ver. 26). How was He to be freed from the limitations of place and people, so that, not Jews alone, but "all men" (ver. 32) might find in Him their Christ? Only by being "lifted up"—by dying from this life, that He might live, and work, and reign in the ampler, the illimitable life. And what even then was to be the conquering force that should make all

hearts His own, the hearts of Jews and of Greeks, of rich and poor, of freemen and of slaves? what the power that should give life to those slaves of sin and death? The power of a love that gave itself to death for them. So it has come to pass that the Cross of Christ is the rallying-place of the nations, and of the ages; "unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness," though it might be, yet "unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). For the Cross is at once the great reconciling power in the world of righteousness and the supreme exhibition of Divine love; and, by this twofold attraction, telling alike on the conscience and on the heart, Christ will "draw" all men to Himself.

If there be any truth in the old tradition, recorded by Eusebius, that these Greeks who came desiring to see Jesus, having heard how His own people sought His death, and perhaps seeing how even now the snares of death were ominously closing in upon Him, were wishful to suggest that He should leave the unfriendly Jewish people for some more hospitable country of the Gentiles, where He could do His work unopposed, and indeed be honoured for His words of truth and works of love, we can under-

stand how the suggestion would appeal to His sympathies ; but may we not also understand how, at once, He would fling the thought aside, as but a temptation ? “ What shall I say ? [*Shall it be,*] ‘ Father, save Me from this hour ? ’ But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” He had refused the temptation to save His life among the Jews, by accepting their *rôle* of Messiahship, and appearing as a hero-king ; He must repudiate equally the temptation to save His life among the Greeks, by going among them as an honoured sage. For, in either case, the life would be only local, and it would be but His own ; the “ grain of wheat,” remaining unhurt, and alive, would nevertheless abide “ by itself.” Only if the grain of wheat die, can it bring forth much fruit ; only by dying can Christ become the source of life to a dying world.

He has therefore made His choice—*via crucis*, *via lucis* : there shall be true kingship, with its wisdom and its power ; but, for Greeks and Jews, the law of Christ’s royalty must be, through death unto life.

WHO IS THIS SON OF MAN?

JOHN xii. 33-50.

ONE phrase which our Lord had already several times used was a cause of great perplexity, and even of offence, to those Jews who were at all inclined to believe in Him. In His conversation with Nicodemus He declared that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (iii. 14); in His argument with the Jews after the Feast of Tabernacles He said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He" (viii. 28); and just now He has once more announced, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (xii. 32). It would almost seem as if the declaration to Nicodemus had been reported by him to others, and had thus got abroad as one of the "hard sayings" of Jesus concerning the Son of Man (see vi. 60); for, telling Him that their law has taught them something of the Messiah that was the exact contrary of this, *viz.* that He "abideth for ever," they ask, "And how sayest Thou, 'The

Son of Man must be lifted up'? *who is this Son of Man?*"

I. THE LIGHT OF TRUTH.

It was indeed true that their "law"—by which they meant that religion of which the law was the distinguishing characteristic—was full of the hope and promise of a coming One who should take to Himself "an everlasting kingdom" (Dan. vii. 27), and most likely they had in their minds that notable prophecy of "One like unto a Son of Man," to whom there "was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him"; and of whom it was said, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 13, 14). But the law and the prophets alike foretold, even as Jesus had just declared, that the way to this everlasting kingship was through death. Had these Jews been blind to the solemn significance of Isaiah's great prophecy of the "despised and rejected" One, of whom it was said, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; He was cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa. liii.

4, 5, 8)? had they not understood from that same prophecy that "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high," not in spite of the sufferings that were to befall Him, but "because He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isa. lii. 13, liii. 12)? And as for the law, we "may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22): from first to last it was a law of *life through death*.

There was indeed an older law than the law of Moses, which taught the same great truth, even the law of nature, which, as Jesus had just reminded them, set forth with so much emphasis the necessity of sacrifice; and there was a prophecy older than their books of the prophets, the prophecy of conscience, which evermore demands a sacrifice for sin. The teaching of Christ did but expound and enforce this ancient teaching of the law of the nature of things and the prophesyings of man's own nature, as well as the great cardinal lesson of the law of Moses and the pathetic foretellings of the later prophets of the Jews, when He said, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"; but that very phrase is intended, by its double significance, to remind them that His suffering means, not weakness, but strength, not shame, but glory, not death

alone, but death as the open gate to fuller life (see Luke xxiv. 25-27).

He who from the beginning has been "the true light, which lighteth every man" (i. 9), had in these last days "come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth may not abide in the darkness" (ver. 46); so that there was truth upon truth for these Jews, light ampler and clearer as following the dimmer and more partial light of former days, and in this were involved at once their gracious privilege and their solemn responsibility. This was the meaning of His last entreating, but warning, words: "While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light" (ver. 36).

II. THE BLINDNESS OF UNBELIEF.

"But though He had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on Him" (ver. 37); and thus it was true of this fuller light, as it had been of the primal "light of men," that "the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not" (i. 4, 5). Isaiah, speaking of the men of his own generation, had only too truly described the judgment that came upon the Jews for their wilful refusal to see the light: "He hath blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they should see with

their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them" (see Isa. vi. 9, 10)—for the "glory" that Isaiah saw (ver. 41) was virtually the glory of the Christ, a glory that had shone before the Jews in all its fulness (i. 14), but they saw it not.

This was God's judgment—"He hath blinded their eyes," but working through their own perversity; for they would not see, and the inevitable result of refusal to see is at last inability to see. The latter is indeed ordained as the penalty of the former, but their perverse unbelief was so far from being God's doing, that His Christ wept, as with broken heart, because of it, saying, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke xix. 41, 42). This law of natural retribution is well illustrated in a recent very popular work. "When one examines the little *Crustacea* which have inhabited for centuries the lakes of the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, one is at first astonished to find these animals apparently endowed with perfect eyes. The pallor of the head is broken by two black pigment specks, conspicuous indeed as the only bits of colour on the whole blanched body; and these, even to the casual observer, certainly represent well-defined

organs of vision. But what do they with eyes in these Stygian waters? There reigns an everlasting night. Is the law for once at fault? A swift incision with the scalpel, a glance with a lens, and their secret is betrayed. The eyes are a mockery. Externally they are organs of vision—the front of the eye is perfect; behind, there is nothing but a mass of ruins. The optic nerve is a shrunken, atrophied, and insensate thread. These animals have organs of vision, and yet they have no vision. They have eyes, but they see not. Exactly what Christ said of men: They had eyes, but no vision. And the reason is the same. It is the simplest problem of natural history. The Crustacea of the Mammoth Cave have chosen to abide in darkness. Therefore they have become fitted for it. By refusing to see they have waived the right to see.”*

So was it with the unbelieving Jews; so may it be with us. The whole awful truth is summed up in the connexion of half a dozen words: “They *did not* believe . . . therefore they *could not* believe” (vers. 37, 39). He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

* Drummond’s “Natural Law in the Spiritual World,” pp. 113, 114.

LOVE'S OWN COMMISSION.

JOHN xiii.

THE opening words of this chapter are in accord with Luke xxii. 15, and may be best understood in the light of our Lord's utterance as there recorded. It was in accordance with His true human nature that the love He bore His disciples should be felt at its intensest just now, when He was about to leave them. So we are told that, as the Feast of the Passover drew near, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost" (R.V., margin). The events and connected sayings that follow illustrate and emphasize this love, as at once concentrated in all its strength and tenderness upon the disciples themselves, and solemnly charging them with its commission as regarded their relations to one another, and to the world beyond.

I. CHRIST'S LOVE FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

1. The service of love is most marvellously exemplified in that act of self-forgetful condescension, which, springing as it did from the circumstances of the occasion, is as a parable for

all time. More than once there had been unseemly disputes among the disciples, which of them should be greatest (Matt. xviii. 1, xx. 20, 21; Mark ix. 33, 34, x. 35-37; Luke ix. 46), and such striving, unseemly at all times, was renewed just when it was most unseemly, on the eve of our Lord's death, and when He was already shaken by the coming anguish (Luke xxii. 24). So hot indeed had this disputation grown, that, as they gathered together for the farewell feast of love, not one of them, as it seems, would so concede the coveted greatness to the rest as to perform the almost necessary office of going from one to another to refresh and cleanse their feet after the heat and dust of the day. Thus Jesus Himself, together with the disciples, sits down to supper unrefreshed. For a while He says nothing, and supper is about to begin; when, pained, not so much for the omission of ministration to Himself, as for the spirit which actuated them towards one another, Master of all things though He be, sent forth from God and returning to God, He "riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel, and girded Himself. Then He poureth water into the bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." It has

been well remarked that to the evangelist, as his comments (ver. 3) indicate, "the scene that follows appeared as one of the sublimest in the life of our Lord. In fact, we might, in contemplating this scene, say with Claudius, 'Such an ideal of man, as presents itself here, never entered the heart of man. Whatever of greatness and glory antiquity may present—a dying Epaminondas, a dying Socrates—vanishes before this ideal of Deity in humiliation, and of a Divine form of a servant.' " *

This ministration to the bodily comfort of the disciples, however, was intended to be the vehicle of a spiritual service, the significance of which is well brought out in the conversation with Peter, who remonstrates at first, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Our Lord replies, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me"—as much as to say: "This condescension that shames you, as though it were a demeaning of Myself to do such a service, is meant to shame you otherwise, and to cleanse you from your vain ambitions and unholy rivalries. If I may not thus cleanse you, you and I are sundered evermore." Then Peter, discerning the significance of it all, replies impetuously, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus answers that

* Tholuck's Commentary, *in loc.*

this is not needed, just as, after a bath, and the subsequent walk to the house of entertainment, nothing more would be necessary than the ablution of the feet, because of the dust that had gathered on them by the way ; for, though these ambitions and disputes were defiling the life of the disciples, they were right at heart, already cleansed in their essential motives and desires by their true devotion to Christ—all save one, the traitor : he was wrong, utterly.

Even for him, however, there may yet be hope ; though the crisis is at hand, there is just the possibility that, at the last moment, he may repent. Jesus will test him, and will at the same time seek to bring him to repentance. For He loves the treacherous Judas, and therefore shows him a token of special affection, by dipping and passing to him one of the Passover bread-cakes—this conveniently serving also as a sign to John which of them was intended by His warning words (vers. 21, 26), though by no means arranged arbitrarily merely for this purpose. Judas, had his heart been even now smitten with compunction, would have declined the token of love of which he was so unworthy, and, like Peter afterwards, would have wept bitterly (Matt. xxvi. 75). But no, he hypocritically takes it, as though nothing were wrong,

and by that last consummate hypocrisy he brings his baseness to its climax, and forthwith leaves the holy covenant of love, which his presence alone darkened and spoiled, to complete the unholy covenant of hate into which he had already entered with the chief priests (Luke xxii. 5, 20, R.V.). "And it was night"—night to him henceforth and for ever.

2. The sacrifice of love, portended by this episode with the traitor, is to crown with its yet more wondrous glory the loving service of the life. That service, indeed, has itself been a sacrifice, but there must yet be the complete sacrifice in death. For the sins of His people—disciples, priests, Pharisees, Jews and Galilæans, Samaritans and Gentiles—He must die, or they may not be redeemed. The sacred institution of the Lord's Supper, now taking place, sets forth this meaning of His death (Luke xxii. 19, 20), as also do His significant words concerning His going away (ver. 33). This leads, by natural transition, to His reminding them that all His love, of service and of sacrifice, is to be their example and inspiration (ver. 34).

II. CHRIST'S CHARGE TO HIS DISCIPLES.

1. The service of love which He had rendered they were to emulate (vers. 12–17). Not indeed

with a slavish literality which would empty the ministrations of their significance of spontaneous affection—as popes and princes, *e.g.*, have poorly enough followed Christ's example by washing the feet of paupers on set occasions, this being but a voluntary humility (Col. ii. 18). But, loving one another as Christ hath loved us, we are to be glad, nay eager, to serve one another in love, as there may be actual need for service, and especially with such service as, after the pattern of His ministrations on that night, shall be helpful towards the overcoming of evil and the attainment of the noblest good.

2. The sacrifice of love will be involved in such a life ; and, if need be, “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John iii. 16). “As I have loved you”—this has been the inspiration of martyr-confessors in the earlier times, and of martyr-missionaries in later days : for love of Christ, and for love of Christ's people, men and women have bravely and cheerfully surrendered all in death.

“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples” : for, in face of such actual presentation of Christ's own love, all scepticism would be dumb, and men would believe (see xvii. 23).

THE UNTROUBLED HEART.

JOHN xiv. 1-14.

THE incidents and converse of this last night have been so far very disquieting. To begin with, the disciples were embarrassed and ashamed through the rebuke of their unseemly quarrel for precedence. Then followed the dark and ominous hints about betrayal. This led to the direct declaration that the Lord would shortly leave them, and to the connected foretelling of Peter's denial of his Master. But worse was to come. All hints and ominous prophecies of coming evil were to be swallowed up and lost in the dread dismay, the abounding shame, and the bitter anguish of the actual arrest, the insults of the mock-trial, and the sentence and terrible reality of death. Was there any possibility of peace for the disciples in such a case? To allay their present disquietude, and to prepare them for the coming woe, He speaks these wise, strong, gracious words. "Let not your heart be troubled: *believe*"—thus He gives the exhortation, and the secret of its fulfilment.

I. THE IMMEDIATE MEANING.

The going away (xiii. 33, xvi. 7)—do we realise what it meant to them? Their present personal desolation would be the least trouble, though this was grievous; for Jesus their Lord had become all in all to these men now, and what would life be without that gracious Presence, with which they had had companionship and converse, and which had been veritably the light of life to them? But with this personal desolation of bereavement was involved the break-down of all their hopes for the kingdom of God—for as yet they knew not how the true Christ could die, and when Jesus should die at last, in utmost humiliation and shame, it would be the death-blow to their confidence that He was the King of Israel. With this break-down of their hopes for the establishment of the kingdom of God, their individual hopes would likewise perish; for not only their personal affection and joy, but their spiritual hopes and aims, were bound up with the work and life of Jesus, so that, if He died, their very religion died.

Well might sorrow fill their hearts (xvi. 6). And He knows; He understands; and in His great love He thus anticipates, and prepares them for, the very worst, speaking comfortable

words. Would they have peace? Then they must have faith: "Believe in God; believe in Me." They must have faith in God; for, whatever happened, His purposes could not fail, His kingdom could not die. And they must also have faith in their Friend and Master, Jesus, who had already brought such Divine blessing into their life that surely, whatever the seeming contradiction of the things that befell, His prophecy and promise of further, fuller blessing must be fulfilled. Indeed, the things that should befall Him would not be what they seemed. Had He not taught them that death was annulled to those that believed in Him (xi. 26); that the true life passed on unhurt, untouched, through the change and shock of seeming death; that it was only an incident on the way of an unending life—unending, because a life in God? Then His death would not, could not, destroy His true life, for Himself or for them. Was the "Father's house" restricted to this present world, so that to die out of the world meant to die out of His fellowship? Or was it not rather true that, just as in the house where they were then assembled there were many "abiding-places" (R.V., margin) for the guests who had come to keep the feast, so in the great Father's house there were many abiding-places for God's

guests, and that to leave the lower room of this world was therefore but to step to the upper room of a better world? Moreover, just as some of the disciples had come on before to "make ready" for the Master and their fellow disciples in the "large upper room" of the feast (Luke xxii. 8, 9, 12, 13), so He was now but going before to "make ready" (ver. 2, literally) for them; and as the disciples who had prepared for the rest received them at last into the guest-chamber, all lighted and prepared for their welcome, so He would by-and-by receive and welcome His own into a place where they and He should abide together evermore.

II. THE REMOTER MEANING.

1. To the disciples. For in the years to come, long after that first great shock of their Master's shameful death, and the amazing, thrilling gladness of His wondrous resurrection, how often they would still need to hear Him say, "Let not your heart be troubled: believe"! That promise that had made sweet music for them with its words of gladsome hope, "I come again, and will receive you unto Myself," how long it should be unfulfilled! For theirs was to be a life of wearing toil and bitter pain for His sake; Jew and Gentile alike would utterly and persis-

tently oppose them ; they must be homeless and friendless ; slanders, reproaches, and contempt should be their portion ; they would “ die daily ” (1 Cor. xv. 31), and at last, in the midst of discouragement and seeming failure, there should be the death that ended all. Was it possible that, through all this disquietude and dismay, they still should keep an untroubled heart ? If they had faith, all things were possible (Matt. xvii. 20). For God was still the same true, living, loving God, their own, whose wisdom could not be at fault, whose power could not lose the day. Just as He had been revealed to them in Jesus (ver. 9), so He remained for ever ; and the words that He had spoken, the works that He had done, through Christ (ver. 10), He was speaking and doing still, yes, even through them (ver. 12), if they would but believe it. Indeed, “ greater works ” were now accomplishing than the works of Christ’s earthly ministry, for the completed truth of His redemption was made known to men (xvi. 12–15), and the full spiritual power of the exalted Saviour was put forth, for His people (vii. 39, xvi. 7) and for the world (Matt. xxviii. 18–20 ; Acts i. 8). Let them then believe in Him, the ever sympathizing Friend, the same true, loving Lord, the fellow-Sufferer, who had trodden the

same path so patiently and faithfully Himself; let them find access to the Father's plenitude of love and power through Him, "the Way," accepting with confidence His "truth," and receiving gladly the inspiration and conquering energy of His "life" (ver. 6); indeed, whatsoever they needed for their holy mission, let them claim, with strong faith, as for His sake (vers. 13, 14)—thus their fears would be chased away, in their weakness they would be made strong, and they would be as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (see 2 Cor. vi. 4-10).

2. To ourselves. For, just as He prayed His last prayer for His people throughout all coming time (xvii. 20), so He spoke His words of gracious help to all that will hear and claim them through all the days. Whatever may be the perplexity and confusion of our life, and whatever its rendings and undoings, tempting us to think that the Divine plan for our life has broken down, and that Christ has no special commission for us now, let us but *believe*—and we shall hear Him saying all along the way of life, in words that will bring their own fulfilment with them, making peace in life's worst discords, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (ver. 27).

THE INDWELLING GOD.

JOHN xiv. 15-24.

IN the previous words we had an instance of our Lord's way of illustrating the highest truth by something present and familiar, as He spoke of the many abiding-places of the Father's house, and of Himself as but about to go from a lower to an upper room ; and this that He might make ready a joyous entertainment to which He should bid them welcome by-and-by. Now there is a further use of the same figure, with the relations of things reversed. For it is more important far that our hearts even now should furnish an abiding-place for God, than that one day we should find lodgment elsewhere. Indeed, only as the place is prepared in our hearts for God's indwelling now, can there be any true preparation for our welcome into the everlasting habitations then. Therefore our Lord, having kindled the hopes of His disciples, wisely turns their thoughts to the spiritual conditions which alone can make fulfilment possible : " If a man love Me, He will keep My word : and My Father will love him, and We

will come unto him, and make Our abiding-place with him " (ver. 23).

I. THE CONDITION OF THE PROMISE.

"If a man love Me," etc. (see also vers. 15, 21): we are thus reminded of the truth, just now so plainly stated, that the only way to the Father's love is through the Son (vers. 6, 7). Is not this a truth of history? For take the devoutest of the heathen seekers after God, and compare them at their best with Christian saints: what a difference in regard to this one thing, the conscious filial relation to God! So, too, of the pre-Christian worthies, through all the progress of the earlier revelations, it is true that, not knowing the Son, they did not know the Father (comp. 1 John ii. 23, 24; iii. 1).

1. How, then, does this principle work? what did He Himself say of its proper working, as regarded His disciples, and also the unbelieving Jews? It was His pure and perfect goodness that should be the attracting charm; for what was this but the manifest goodness of God, which the uncorrupted instinct of the heart would acknowledge and trust? Or, if there was not this immediate trust in Himself, the mani-

festly Divine One, at least there should be the recognition that His works were the works of God (ver. 11); and thus, by "the way" of His word or of His works, trusting Himself or trusting His deeds, men should find, and adore, and love God, and Christ as the Son of God.

2. This means that they "keep My word," as He said with earnest iteration. For what was the worth of a love that did not pass into loving deeds? who were the loyal servants, that rendered no loyal service (vers. 15, 21)? But to keep His "word" was more than the obeying of commands, the rendering of service: it meant the earnest cherishing of all that He said of Himself in relation to men (see viii. 25), including such painful sayings as had so disquieted the hearts of His disciples (x. 15, xii. 32, xiii. 33), and the proclamation of the same "word" to the world, when He should be gone.

What is all this but faith?—faith active and faith passive, if we may make the distinction. For by faith we so apprehend the love of Christ, that all our love goes forth to Him with eager and swift desire; and in our true love for Him we so intensely believe, that our faith must cherish all His words, and fulfil all His works. Such faith it is, working by love, that makes ready for the indwelling God.

II. THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE.

1. "We will come unto him": what wonderful visitation! It had been dimly anticipated in former times (Ps. viii. 4); but now it was to be the free and full privilege of all that would receive it (Rev. iii. 20). Some indeed could not receive God, nor could they even behold or know Him (ver. 17); from them God and Christ alike were hidden (see ver. 21), because sin had blinded their eyes (xii. 40; 2 Cor. iv. 4; 1 John ii. 11; Rev. iii. 17). But to the contrite in spirit God will look (Isa. lxvi. 2); to the humble He will draw nigh (James iv. 6, 8).

2. "And make Our abode with him": not as coming for a temporary sojourn, but to be with us "for ever" (ver. 16). And that our heart should be God's *home*—surely this means unutterable love of God to us, and our unspeakable joy in God! For it means most intimate communing, even the sharing of His life. He that inhabits eternity is the willing inmate of the lowly soul (Isa. lvii. 15).

Let us but be faithful—full of faith—and we may say exultantly, "This God is our God for ever and ever" (Ps. xlviii. 14)!

THE LEGACY OF PEACE.

JOHN xiv. 25-31.

THE promise of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate and Helper of Christ's people, the Spirit of truth and grace, a promise made so prominent and emphatic in these farewell words of Christ, has been already uttered (vers. 16, 17), and is now re-uttered with special emphasis. In what was said of the advent of God to the faithful heart, and His gracious inhabitation there, it was implied that by the Spirit of grace God would come and make His abode with men; and if man would truly prepare for God, it must be as the Spirit of truth prepares him.

In this renewal of the promise, not only is there a virtual reassertion of the truth that God will make His abode with those that believe in Jesus—"whom the Father will send in My name" (ver. 26)—but, introducing, as they do, the declaration of our Lord's bequest of peace, these words carry us back to the exhortation with which the discourse begins (ver. 1), and throw new light on the possibilities of comfort and rest, even in an uncomfortable and unrestful world, which are there so graciously presented.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN PEACE.

The insistence throughout this chapter on the necessity of peace, and the return to the topic at the close of the discourse (xvi. 33), are very striking, and lead us to enquire into what seems to be the fundamental importance of this element of the Christian life.

1. It is important to our true happiness. Happiness and joy are not identical ; but happiness may perhaps be correctly defined as a continuance of peace, varied and brightened by a more or less frequent recurrence of joy. The joy may be, must be, intermittent, but if we are to be truly happy the peace must abide. There may indeed be joy without peace, intervals of exhilaration in a life of unquietness and gloom ; but such joy is not happiness, even while it lasts, and when it is gone it leaves the unquietness and gloom more unquiet and gloomy still. Mere joy without an underflowing peace is like the spray of the cataract, appearing for a moment, and then lost ; but true happiness is like a gliding stream, rippled here and there into smiles, and sometimes flowing merrily, but, whether with or without the ripples and the song, having an underflow that never fails. When our peace flows "as a river" (Isa. xlviii.

18), and joy and gladness, as God may bid them, come and go, then are we happy, and only then.

2. It is important to our true well-being. Nothing wears the soul like unrestfulness and anxiety ; and in like manner the spiritual health will be eaten away by disquieting doubt and foreboding fearfulness. If we are to "be in health" (3 John 2), we must be at peace.

3. It is important to our strength and efficiency of service. Anxiety and suspense have a peculiarly paralysing effect on effort. That we may put forth our best strength, and accomplish some worthy result, we must concentrate our attention and energy upon our task ; and this we can do only as we are free from painful distractions, only as we have peace. Not only for their own comfort's sake, then, but for the sake of their wholesomeness of spiritual life, and strength of spiritual service, our Lord, who was about to send His disciples forth "to do service" for the heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14), insisted so urgently on the necessity of peace ; and, just before the final commission was given, the same gift of peace was again urged on their acceptance (xx. 19, 21, 26).

II. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN PEACE.

There are three spheres in which we are liable

to discord, anxiety, and suspense: in our relations with ourselves, with God, and with the world. Into all these regions of our life sin has introduced discord; into these same realms of our being Christ breathes peace.

1. In our relation to ourselves. The Apostle Paul has wonderfully delineated the strife and unrest of man's own nature, the better nature and the worse in deadly conflict, the law in the members warring against the law of the mind, the approval of the good thwarted by the practice of evil (Rom. vii. 14-25); and this discord can be done away only when Christ breathes peace, or, in other words, when "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" makes us "free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. viii. 2). Thus the sending of "the *Holy Spirit*" (ver. 26) is the secret of the impartation of peace to those whose unholy nature has caused them such unrest.

2. In our relation to God. Sin has made enmity between us and God (iii. 36; Rom. viii. 7, 8); and we have made ourselves in practice the children of the wicked one (viii. 38, 44; 1 John iii. 8, 10). But when our "sins are forgiven for His name's sake" (1 John ii. 12), then the Spirit is sent, in His name, as the Spirit of "the Father" (ver. 26), the Spirit of

gracious adoption (Rom. viii. 15, 16), and where there was alienation there is friendship, where there was enmity there is peace—the peace of those upon whom all that wealth of love has come as their portion for ever (1 John iii. 1, 2).

3. In our relation to the world. Discord with God means discord everywhere, within and without; and so, in our sin, we are at strife with those that should be our brethren (1 John iii. 10), and all the order of this world's affairs seems "out of course" (Ps. lxxxii. 5). But "the love of the Spirit" (Rom. xv. 30) means "love, longsuffering, kindness, goodness" (Gal. v. 22) binding all men "into one" (see xi. 52); and, giving us confidence towards "the Father," it gives us peace amid all the chances and changes of this transitory life (vers. 13, 14; 1 John v. 14, 15).

In giving this gift of peace, Christ was giving of "His own"; not only because the Spirit of peace should be sent in His name (ver. 26), sent indeed by Him (xv. 26), and should also "bring to remembrance" all His peace-inspiring words, but because He had so perfectly experienced and exemplified this peace in His own life. In truest peace of perfect love, notwithstanding all "contradiction of sinners against

Himself" (Heb. xii. 3)—which was therefore "*against themselves*" (*ibid.*, R.V.) more than against Him, had they but known it; in truest peace with God, so that He and the Father were One (x. 30; ver. 31); and in truest peace with Himself, no faintest impulse of sin marring His inward life's holy calm (ver. 30); as regarded His outward life, also, having no disquietude of doubt or fearfulness, although the shocks of sorrow and danger were so many, and there now impended the last, terrible shock of shameful death (but see ver. 28)—well might such a One say, "*My peace* I give unto you"; and well may we hear Him say evermore, amid all the warrings and seeming confusions of our life here, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

JOHN xv. 1-12.

THE last words of the previous chapter, "Arise, let us go hence" (xiv. 31), show that the farewell words were interrupted for a while, as our Lord and His disciples left the upper room and went forth to Gethsemane. As they wended their way down the slope towards the brook Kidron, they came among the vines, which at this season of the year had just been pruned; and near by were the fires, into which the prunings had been cast. He pauses in a quiet spot, by one of the vines whose branches showed the bleeding cuts of the pruning-knife, and, looking round upon His disciples, says, "I am the true Vine": *i.e.* ideally true, as contrasted with what was but a type of better things—for all nature is but typical of the higher realities of spirit. Pointing to some of the fruitless branches lying around, that had been cut off by the vine-dresser, He says, "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away"; and, pointing again to some of the branches which showed that certain parts had been pruned off that hindered the full develop-

ment of the fruit, He says, "Every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit." The disciples were clean already, He says, because of the word of the gospel which He had spoken unto them (xiii. 10); for the love which He had declared to them (see xvii. 26) had renewed their nature, and prepared them to bring forth the fruit of holiness. But still they needed the further cleansing which God's gracious discipline would give (xiii. 8, 10), a discipline into which they were so soon to be plunged, and which would purge them of what remained of worldliness and sin. Should they, however, resist God's dealings with them, and shut their hearts against Christ's love, allowing the influences of the world and sin to triumph, then there remained for them but the fate of the fruitless branches—a fate which was already befalling one of their number, Judas—to be cast off from Christ, withered, worthless, dead. But, that theirs might be a better destiny, let them, He says, abide in Him, and they shall bring forth much fruit; for apart from Him they can do nothing.

I. THE RELATIONSHIP.

1. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches": the relationship is one of unity. When we look

at the vine, or any tree, we see indeed a manifoldness—of trunk, branches, stems, twigs, tendrils, and blossoms or fruit; but the tree, with all its variety of parts, is essentially one. So Christ and His people are one. How this marks Him off from all other leaders of men! A Teacher, an Example, a Leader—He was all this: but how much more! His people are incorporate into Himself (Eph. i. 22, 23; Col. i. 18). And how this same unity with Christ marks off Christians from other men! To respect, to obey, even to worship—this is not enough: we must be one with Him, as He is one with God (xvii. 21–23).

2. This unity is a unity of life. In the case of a building, or any mechanical arrangement of man, the unity is only a unity of design, of structure, of adaptation; and therefore, if any part be removed, it still remains what it was, in itself, though detached from its place and use. But a tree is one because one life gives it unity, and if a branch be severed from the parent stem, so that the sap can no longer flow into it, it dies. Such is the oneness of Christ and His people: He is their life (xiv. 6; and see vi. 53–57, etc.). How this truth smites to the ground the errors of mere ecclesiasticism! For any sort of connexion with a “church,” however tenacious, is of itself but an adjustment,

as of the parts of a building ; only as we are built into the "Living Stone" are we ourselves "living stones . . . a spiritual house" (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5).

3. This life is a life of love. Whether we will or not, He is the life of our common human nature (i. 4), and in this respect apart from Him we are nothing—indeed, we are not. But His union with His people is a moral union, a union of affection, sympathy, and will ; and the life which unites Christ and His people into one is a life of love. The love had been in many ways declared to them (ver. 3) ; it had grown upon them through all their blessed intercourse with Him, and it was to take entire possession of the disciples soon. How this truth smites sacramentarianism, and all kindred errors ! For the life that makes Christ and His people one is no life such as may be conveyed physically, or metaphysically, but a life resulting from the conscious union of person with person, mind with mind, heart with heart.

II. THE CONTINUANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP.

"He that abideth in Me, and I in him" : the union is not something accomplished once for all, and continuing by intrinsic necessity, but it must be maintained, and the maintenance is conditional.

1. There must be the continued willing and glad acceptance of Christ's love. At the outset it is graciously offered, not forced upon us ; and in the after life we may suffer rivalries to triumph, if we will.

2. There must be the eager response of our own love to Christ. For to take His love selfishly is to fail to receive it at all, to destroy it in the taking. Only in proportion as we yield to it do we take it, and to yield to it is to let our own affections be drawn out by it.

3. There must be the loyal obedience of love. The very nature of love is that it is an outgoing, a giving of one's self to another. He gives free and full salvation ; we give free and full devotion (vers. 9, 10). So all mere sentiment, all merely contemplative and mystical religion, is put aside : if religion is not practical, it is nothing, for, if love fails to work itself out in obedience of love, it ceases to be love at all.

III. THE RESULTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP.

"The same beareth much fruit": this has been indicated in its Christward aspect, and it is more particularly specified as the fruitfulness of brotherly love among Christians (ver. 12).

1. Service for the sake of others. The vine's rich clusters are for man ; this is the meaning

of the hidden motions of its life, and this is the finished result—for man's sake. Was not this the meaning of all Christ's life—to help, to bless, to save mankind? and is not man's final and full salvation the perfected result? In like manner, if the true impulse of this generous Vine is in us, our life will be full of ministration, blessing, and salvation for the world.

2. Sacrifice for the sake of others. The pruning of the vine, its bleeding, its loss—this is all in order that there may be richer, better, more abundant fruit for man. Just so it was with Jesus: we see Him suffering, dying for man's sake; giving not only His strength and His love, but Himself—Himself in sacrifice—for us, for our salvation. His comfort, His ease, His pleasure are pruned away by the great Vinedresser, that more abundant good may be ours. So must it be with us. That which nature prizes must be parted with, that which seems necessary to life must be forgone, that which the world counts good must be yielded up, that by our loss the world may have better gain, that by our dying, if need be, the world may have truer life.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST.

JOHN xv. 13-21.

WE come now to one of the sweetest and most smiling spots in all this holy tract of the heaven-lit land of blessing. He has bidden them carry an untroubled heart through all life's tumult and alarm, telling them that God shall be in very truth their own God, bringing of necessity with His indwelling presence the divinest peace. He has further taught them that the union with Himself shall be so close, so intimate, so vital, that all His life of love shall be their own, making their life also to be fruitful in all good. And now He at once sums up what He has said, and anticipates what He will say, in the words, which it was worth while for the world to have waited all the long centuries to hear, "*Ye are My friends.*"

The votaries of heathenism are slaves of their deities ; the people under the law of Moses were the servants of Jehovah ; the disciples of the Christian faith are friends of Christ. Such, at least, is His wish concerning us. Let us, then,

make reverent enquiry concerning this sweetest and most sacred truth.

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN ITSELF?

1. An appreciative knowledge of the truth : “the bondservant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but . . . all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you.” That is, we have not blindly to obey the mere bidding of a taskmaster, but, so far as is possible, we share the counsels of our Lord, we are given to see something of the meaning of His behests, we have granted to us a vision of the purposes of God, and of the blessed significance of His coming kingdom. “If it were not so, I would have told you” (xiv. 2)—in those words we have the assurance that nothing shall be kept from us which it really concerns us to know ; “He shall teach you all things” (xiv. 26) . . . “He shall guide you into all the truth” (xvi. 13)—thus we are assured that Christ, by His Spirit, shall take us into His confidence, if we may so say, whispering to us the secret things of the covenant of grace, “that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.” For “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. ii. 12, 16).

2. An interchange of full affection : “Even

as the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you . . . ye shall abide in My love" (vers. 9, 10). This love He has declared to them, in His words and by His works; and these words of regretful, lingering farewell, yet more, if possible, than all others that He has spoken, breathe unutterable love. But this love is yet to be proved to them in a way that only afterwards will they fully understand, and He gently hints it now, reminding them that there can be no pledge of love like laying down one's life for others—as much as to say, "This you shall see Me do for you." Such a love it is, then, a love that sought us out and chose us (ver. 16) when we were all unlovely, that spent itself in the ungrudging devotion of life and lavished itself in the willing sacrifice of death—such is the love with which we have fellowship, "which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19), but is all our own.

3. A glad and free obedience (vers. 10, 17.) "For the love of Christ constraineth us . . . that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). Thus the obedience is not the irksome performance of a task, but the enthusiastic outflow of eager and intense desire. It is the blending of our will with Christ's will, in freedom of love.

II. WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE AS ITS RESULT?

1. Joy, as of those who see the heavenly vision (ver. 11). The true ideal of life shines on them, benign and beautiful beyond all telling; they hear things which it is not possible to utter; above all, they behold Him who is "the truth" (xiv. 6, 19), and His joy is theirs, and their joy is full.

2. Life, as of those who abide in the fellowship of a living love (ver. 10). A love that sacrificed itself in death would be but a precious memory; whereas the love that went down into death's eclipse, and emerged as victor for evermore, strong in its brightness as the shining sun (Rev. i. 16-18), this love is a love that not only lives but gives life (xiv. 19), and our love, changing glances with this love, must likewise live for ever (xvii. 3). *So, at least, one knew* (xiii. 23; 1 John v. 20).

3. Liberty, as of those who lose their wills to find them, to whom therefore no commandments of their Lord are grievous (ver. 10; 1 John v. 3), because indeed, not only the inspiration of the commandment, but the command itself is love (vers. 12, 17).

And what if, loving others for His sake,

Christ's disciples are hated and persecuted by those whom they love and seek to bless? All this, He says, is "for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me" (ver. 21). Thus the very opposition of men, in such a case, bitter though it be, is an unintended testimony, and therefore, in this respect, a precious pledge, that those whom they hate and maltreat as enemies are in very truth the friends of Christ.

THE TWOFOLD WITNESS.

JOHN xv. 22-27.

CHRIST has just spoken of His rejection by the people whom He came to save (vers. 18-21). Now He declares how utterly inexcusable was this conduct, for in hating Him they hated the Father whom He revealed (vers. 22, 23: see xiv. 9). The divineness of His works, at least, they should have recognised (ver. 24), even if they failed, by their deafness, to catch the Divine accent in His words. But no, they were perversely blind and deaf, and, with the wicked contradictoriness that had been spoken of long ago (ver. 25), they hated the good because it was good, and therefore to their own condemnation.

His testimony, then, they have rejected, and the concurrent testimony of the Spirit of God they have ignored. But the Spirit was soon to come to men as the Divine-human Saviour, and therefore testifying so mightily and so persuasively as He had never testified before (see vii. 39, and note); and this testimony of the Spirit of Christ, with the testimony of

the disciples of Christ, should at last prevail. "When the Advocate is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which goeth forth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me : and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning."

I. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

Now what does this mean, but that the Spirit shall be henceforth in closest contact with every human heart, seeking to prepare for Christ, and then presenting Christ? All this He shall do as "the Spirit of truth," revealing to man his true needs, and offering that which alone can truly meet and satisfy his needs.

1. His action on the conscience—showing man his real relation to God's will. For the Spirit unfolds to us the import of righteousness, as signifying a strict accord with the everlasting rectitude of God's own nature ; and more especially the import of holiness, as meaning a personal consecration to the will and service of the Holy One. This import grows upon us, as of a spiritual law which is "holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. vii. 12) beyond all our thought. But what does it portend, in its immediate bearing upon ourselves? Conscience, as thus taught

by the Spirit, has both a backward and a forward glance ; and the result is that we are hopeless, because of the guilt of the past, and helpless in view of the claims of the future (Rom. vii. 13, 14). Thus the Spirit has done His preparatory work with conscience, and just when we are helpless and hopeless He reveals " Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead " ; so that now, in spite of the guilt of the past, we yet may exclaim, " Who is he that shall condemn ? " and in face of the strenuous struggles of the future may throw down the triumphant challenge, " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? " (Rom. viii. 34, 35.)

2. His action on the affections—showing man his real relation to God's love. He wakes the slumbering craving for the infinite, the unsatisfiable longing for an unknown good ; and then He shows us Christ, so Divine in His greatness, and having therefore illimitable resource, but withal so human in His gentleness, and therefore coming closely home to our inmost and most secret wants. For the Spirit still testifies to the aching, lonely heart, not only of the Divine Father, but of Him who said, " Ye are My friends : no longer servants, but friends " (vers. 14, 15).

Thus He is the Spirit of holiness, and the

Spirit of love ; from which it follows that He is likewise the Spirit of hope. Through the conscience and affections He acts also on our ideals, confirming and transfiguring what true ideals we already have, and opening out to us new, radiant visions of blessedness as yet undreamt of. For God's will of love, as working "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24), cannot allow a continuance of the contradictions that beset us now ; and, though we cannot properly articulate our longings, "the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us . . . according to the will of God" (Rom. viii. 26, 27). We have "this hope" (1 John iii. 3), then, in Christ, "sealed" to us by the "Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13) ; and so the Christ, of whom He bears witness, is our Saviour, our Love, our Eternal Life !

II. THE WITNESS OF THE DISCIPLES.

The power of the Spirit's testimony is conditional. It is obviously conditional upon our attitude towards His witnessing. For, if we heed Him not, then the conscience becomes dulled, our affections are squandered upon the world, and we acquiesce in the commonplace conditions of a life over which no longer bend the alluring heavens [(i. 51). Well then may

it be said, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19); and, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30). But this witness of the Spirit is conditional, in part, on the concurrent testimony of Christ's disciples.

1. It is for them to make known the truth concerning Christ, which the Spirit shall then apply to the hearts of men. For never do we hear that the Spirit has done His work apart from this human testimony. Whether the word be preached by the life, or transmitted by the written or printed page, in any case there must be the annunciation of the good tidings by those who, for this very cause, are chosen, appointed, sent by Christ (xiii. 20; ver. 16). "I will send the Spirit," He said (ver. 26); and again, "I send you" (xx. 21). Nor has that commission ceased; for the witness borne by Peter at Pentecost, and afterwards (Acts ii. 32, iii. 15, v. 32, etc.), and perpetuated long years later by the written words of his fellow-apostle John (1 John i. 1-4), if it has come to us, must by us be carried forward, "for a testimony unto all the nations," until "the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14).

2. But, especially, it is for us to bear witness to Christ by making manifest to others what He

is to us, that so the glorious reality of His great redemption may be known to be real by its evident reality in our own life. Thus it was with the early preaching of the apostles: "they took knowledge of them, *that they had been with Jesus*" (Acts iv. 13); and thus it was with the later testimony: "truly our fellowship is . . . with Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). So, too, it must be palpable to others that righteousness, the love of Christ, and eternal life are the great realities of our existence, or the testimony of our words may be powerless, and there may be little possibility of any effectual witness of the Spirit.

Could the disciples resist, and can we resist, the pathos of the appeal, "because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (ver. 27)? For if we "*know Him*, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. iii. 10), must we not do our very utmost that others, who now misunderstand and disbelieve, may come to know Him too? So to us He shall be, by the blessed reaction of our testimony on ourselves, the "Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. xxii. 13).

*THE SPIRIT'S REVERSAL OF THE
WORLD'S JUDGMENT.*

JOHN xvi. 1-11.

NOW follows a renewal of the warning already hinted (xv. 18-21), and a renewal of the encouragement just conveyed to them in the reiterated promise of the Spirit (xv. 26). Hitherto Christ had been the Advocate of His disciples—at once their Spokesman and Champion. But He is going away, and what then? Then surely they will be hopeless! For “they shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God.” Yet He had said, “I will not leave you desolate” (xiv. 18); and now He goes on to tell how the “other Advocate” of whom He has spoken (xiv. 16, xv. 26) shall befriend them, and effectually espouse their cause.

The word “Advocate” suggests a trial. The pretended trial before the high priest, and the little better than mock-trial before Pilate, were now very near, when Christ Himself would be arraigned as an offender, and condemned as worthy of death. So should it be with His

followers afterwards, who, in formal trials, and under the rough lynch law of the world, should be "set forth . . . as men doomed to death : a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. iv. 9). For in all these trials the verdict would be *contra*, Christ and His people being condemned, and the unbelieving world triumphing. But, contemporaneously with all human trials, there is a trial taking place in the unseen world, either confirming or overriding the verdict of men ; and so our Lord in these words (vers. 8-11) tells of an impending reversal of the world's judgment, to be effected by His Spirit.

I. IN RESPECT OF SIN.

1. The world's verdict had been, and was, that Christ was a sinner (ix. 24, xviii. 30). And His impalement on the cross of shame was the setting forth of this verdict before all men, and to all time ; while it was as though the very heavens, towards which He was "lifted up," were challenged to impugn its truth.

Why was this verdict? Because Christ had repeatedly and persistently traversed all the fictions and frivolities of their "law." *Their* law—what was it? That a man, by a pious subterfuge of pretended consecration to God, might absolve himself from the duty of doing

aught for father or mother (Mark vii. 11, 12); that an oath by the sanctuary may be broken, but an oath by the gold of the sanctuary is binding; that the little, paltry herbs of the garden-plot must be scrupulously tithed, while judgment and mercy and faith, in their great broad aspects and vital meaning, are utterly ignored; that the hands, and all outside show of the life, must be carefully washed, lest any suspicion of defilement be there, whereas the inner life may cherish all its uncleanness unrebuked (Matt. xxiii. 16-28); that men must keep the feast, and attend at the temple, while all that the temple signifies is set at naught (ii. 13-19); that a man must so keep the Sabbath as to do no good on that day, though the infirmities and woes of his brother-men cry aloud for help, and if One dares to do good His very good is evil spoken of (v. 5, 10, 16; ix. 1, 14, 16, 24, 29); that to dare to identify good works with the will of God was blasphemy, but it was no sin to repudiate the manifest love of God, throwing slander and insult in its face (viii. 48, 49; x. 33, 38): this was *their law*, "*and by that law He ought to die*" (xix. 7)—yes, truly enough, if the law itself was true, for He had opposed and exposed it, times without number, in all His words, and by all His works.

2. But what was the true law? "*Thou shalt love*" (Mark xii. 30, 31)—yes, for "to love Him with all the heart, and to love one's neighbour as one's self, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark xii. 33) of sanctimonious devotion to God, and infinitely more than all the folly, to say nothing of the lying villainy, of their "law."

What, then, was the relation of Jesus to this divinest law of love? What was sin, and who were the sinners, as measured by its claims? Indeed, only to behold that life, which had been lived out in all its beauty before their eyes, and not to believe—this was the sin of sins (xii. 37–40); and when at the last, because of a life so evidently good, they condemned Him to be worthy of death, what was this but their own worst, blackest condemnation? See xv. 22–25. And on the day of Pentecost the Spirit so convicted them in respect of sin—"of sin, because they believe not on Me" (ver. 9)—that, with anguish of heart, they cried to the apostles, "What shall we do?" (Acts ii. 22, 23, 36, 37.)

II. IN RESPECT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1. If the Jews had condemned Jesus as a sinner, and this because of His utter antagonism to them and their law, it followed of necessity

that by pronouncing Him a sinner they virtually announced themselves as righteous. Indeed, this was their boast ; they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at naught." They thanked God that they were not as the rest of men—they were moral, they fasted, they gave tithes (Luke xviii. 9-12). Thus the crucifixion of Jesus, the steadfast opponent of their mock-righteousness and self-complacency, was at once the consummate expression of their zeal for their own law and the supreme announcement of their self-satisfied righteousness.

2. But what was the meaning of the empty grave on the resurrection morning ? and of the ascension at last into the eternal heavens ? As Peter reminded them at Pentecost, it was evident now that "by the hand of *lawless men*" this Jesus had been crucified and slain—"whom *God raised up*" (Acts ii. 23, 24) ; and again, "This Jesus did God raise up" (*ibid.*, 32). So that, by God's own act, the manifesto of righteousness was completely reversed, and Peter well might say, without fear of contradiction : "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, *that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ*, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (*ibid.*, 36). He was mightily declared therefore to be the right-

eous One ; and in respect of this righteousness the Jews were convicted at last, by the Spirit of Christ, and the more so as this very gift of the Spirit betokened His exaltation and plenitude of power (Acts ii. 33 ; and comp. ver. 10 : “ because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more ”).

III. IN RESPECT OF JUDGMENT.

Thus, both terms of the judgment being entirely reversed in their meaning, it followed that the judgment itself was completely reversed. If the Jews were sinful, and not Jesus, if He was righteous, and not His enemies, then, just when the Prince of this world had accomplished the great parody of judgment on Calvary, he himself was judged, for he was working to his own undoing and defeat. Never was his work so essentially condemned as base and bad, till he brought about the death of the Prince of life ; and never has his power been so shaken as when men have been taught by the Spirit to read his nature in that his darkest deed of death, and have learned likewise God’s utmost love (1 John iv. 10).

We may well be glad, therefore, and triumph in our Christ ; for He Himself befriends His

people before an unfriendly world, and by the Spirit of truth, His advocate and ours, He carries our cause in the secret court of the souls of men, even as at the tribunal of history ; and the judgment of the great day shall make the victory complete.

THE INHERITANCE OF TRUTH.

JOHN xvi. 12-15.

ONLY a few moments ago Jesus had said, "It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Advocate will not come unto you ; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." He then proceeded to show the disciples how, as their Advocate, the Spirit whom He would send should espouse their cause, and convict a gainsaying world. Now He goes on to tell them of the positive gain that shall come to themselves under the leadership and inspiration of the same Spirit, once more called "the Spirit of truth" (xiv. 17, xv. 26). For, like Israel of old, not only are they to be defended from their enemies, but, the maledictions of bitter unbelief being beaten back, they are to be brought into the full possession and promise of the inheritance of truth.

I. THE POSSESSION OF THE TRUTH.

"When He is come, He shall guide you into all the truth"—the very word implying that they should be, not taken as with a swift rush of

mastery into the immediate possession of truth's domains, but led on their way, led gently and warily, but strongly, until the inheritance, well surveyed and well approached, should be at last their own. For just as our Lord, in His earlier ministry, "spake the word unto them, as they were able to hear it" (Mark iv. 33), and even now must defer much teaching that He would otherwise have given, because of their inability to receive the full truth yet (ver. 12), so the Spirit, in His after teaching, will not present the lesson without regard to the capacity of the learner, but only as the disciples can assimilate the truth shall they receive it. Such is still the necessary law of the Spirit's teaching. There may be those who would crave for a complete scheme of faith, a ready-made and perfect creed, to be accepted without questioning and taken as the charter and treaty of truth to the end of time. But, even if otherwise this were possible, such externality of truth would avail nothing for the interior life; the truth would be but as the countries depicted on a map, rather than a realm to live in, our fatherland and home. To be our true inheritance, at once to possess us and be possessed by us, the truth must lure us on, taking captive, by its fair attractions, all our thought, and love, and will; and, when thus

the truth has made us its own, it will be our own, for we shall know it as those that are its kindred—the truth shall have made us true. This was the meaning of the word spoken some time since to the Jews, “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know” (vii. 17). And in view, not only of the utter falseness of the unbelieving Jews, but of the treachery of Judas, the disloyalty of Peter, and the cowardice of all the band—an untrueness that might well dismay and overwhelm them when they realised all its shameful meaning—how gentle and gracious was their Master, how wisely and strongly good, to promise an immediate Helper and Friend who should take these untrue ones, trembling and contrite as they were, and be their Guide “into *the truth*”!

II. THE PROMISE OF THE TRUTH.

Not only, however, for their own full possession of such truth as they need now, if they truly respond to its claims and yield to its sovereignty, but for their assurance of hope that through all the ages this sovereign truth shall gain growing victories, will the same Spirit teach and inspire the disciples: “He shall declare unto you the things that are to come.” For only as “the truth” triumphs, over all unbelief of men, over

all confusions of history, over all contradictions of nature, banishing sin from the soul, and all obstructions from the path of the world's progress, and every shadow of distress and death from the universe—only so is the truth in the fullest sense truth to us ; and therefore, only as our own possession of it breaks into radiant promise of its fuller triumph does the inheritance of truth take on its best beauty and dower us with its richest good. Such prophecy of coming triumph was well illustrated in the glorious apocalypse vouchsafed to the Apostle John ; but the insight of the faithful heart, as taught by “the Spirit of truth,” is always eagerly prophetic of “the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10).

Not without deepest meaning did our Lord say, “I am the Truth” (xiv. 6), for in Him “are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden” (Col. ii. 3). Therefore He now reminds the disciples that the truth into which they shall be led shall be His own truth, and such as shall glorify Him (ver. 14). For, though they be “the things of God” that the Spirit makes known (1 Cor. ii. 10–12), yet the things of God are the things of Christ (ver. 15) ; and in proportion as we “learn Christ” (Eph. iv. 20) do

we learn all things, "the present truth" (2 Pet. i. 12) of spiritual newness of life, "even as truth is in Jesus" (Eph. iv. 21-24), and truth's promise and prophecy, so sure to all who "hold the testimony of Jesus," of the day when all things shall be made new (Rev. xix. 10, xxi. 5).

THE ABOUNDING JOY.

JOHN xvi. 16-33.

THE first and last words of the discourse are words of peace (xiv. 1 ; ver. 33), for this was just then the pressing need of the disciples ; but all along His utterances there vibrates a thrill of joy, breaking now and again into a rapture of exultancy (xiv. 13, 28 ; xv. 8, 11), and coming out in these later words of the discourse into a sustained triumph of gladness (vers. 20-24), such that His farewell word may be, not merely the reiterated assurance of "peace," but the exhortation and promise of "good cheer" (ver. 33).

It was true that dark shadows had fallen on the disciples as their Master spoke of His going away, and as He went on to foretell the revilings and threatenings that should come upon them in their helplessness (xiv. 28, xv. 21 ; vers. 2-6). Now again He speaks of His departure : "A little while, and ye behold Me no more" (ver. 16) ; and once more He speaks of the woes that await them : "In the world ye have tribulation" (ver. 33). But in either case the note of sadness is transformed into a trumpet-tone of

joy : "Again a little while, and ye shall see Me" . . . "I have overcome the world." For them, therefore, as well as for Himself, there is this twofold rejoicing—a joy that "no one taketh away," a joy that is "full."

I. THE JOY OF THE VISION OF CHRIST.

1. There should be the vision of the risen Christ. "A little while"—how *long* a while it seemed, as it was passing drearily, and they, in their heart-broken lonesomeness, were plunged in a night of gloom to which it seemed that morning would never come ! "For as yet they knew not that He must rise again from the dead" (xx. 9). Indeed, such was their dumb despair at the mere mention of His leaving them, and at the premonitions of the strange manner of that departure, that none of them said, "Whither goest Thou?" Thus the very comfort that would have been their compensation, the word of hope that would have shone as a star in the darkness of their night until the full-orbed morning burst upon them—of these they robbed themselves because they would not ask Him concerning that which He would have been glad to tell (vers. 5, 6, 12). Nevertheless He did tell them, had they only had ears to hear : "I will see you again" (ver. 22). And

He fulfilled His word—He came, He “showed Himself alive” (Acts i. 3); and “the disciples were glad, when they saw the Lord” (xx. 20). Now, too, that other word was fulfilled which He spake, “a little while”; for if the night-watch seemed long, to be followed, as they supposed, nevermore by day, yet when the glorious sun was risen, and there should be no more night, their time of sorrow was but like some troubled dream that is past.

2. There should be the vision of the spiritual Christ. “A little while”—there was again a season of waiting, after they had seen Him “going into heaven” (Acts i. 4, 9–11, 14), and again they mourned an absent Lord. Yet not now as those that have no hope; for to see Him go away in the triumph of abounding life was not the same as beholding His departure by the strange way of shameful death. Their Lord had lived, and they had seen Him; He lived still, though they saw Him not; and when at the last there came the rushing sound from heaven, and the dividing flames appeared, and each soul was thrilled with the mysterious, mighty movement of an unseen Presence (Acts ii. 1–4), then all the disciples said, with hushed but eager accents, as they read each his own wondrous rapture on his brother’s face, “It is the Lord!”

II. THE JOY OF THE VICTORY OF CHRIST.

1. He had shown Himself Victor of death, and therefore the world's "tribulation" should not hurt His people now; for the world was overcome, its power was broken, and all that it could do was but as the death-throes of its utter defeat (ver. 33). "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 35, 37).

2. He had shown Himself Victor in the spiritual realm—King of truth (xviii. 37); and so all worlds should do Him homage, and all powers should hasten to execute His behests. With such authority, He should immediately fulfil all the true desires and prayers of His people (vers. 23, 24), and this in exactest accord with the love of the Father towards them (vers. 26, 27); and with the same confidence of authority He should send His disciples to conquer the world in His name (Matt. xxviii. 18–20).

To ourselves this same abounding joy is given, if we will but claim it (ver. 24); for He says to all His disheartened ones, "Be of good cheer."

"THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU"

JOHN xiv. 25; xv. 11; xvi. 1, 25, 33.

HAVING been led to the close of the most memorable address that Christ ever delivered to His disciples, and through them to us and all who are willing to give reverent heed, and pausing with the disciples in the solemn hush preceding His farewell prayer, we do well to gather up in brief survey of remembrance the manifold aim and purpose of such sacred words, and indeed of all the words of life which He, the Living Word, spoke for the counsel and comfort of His people, and of which these are the perfect flower, shedding divinest fragrance throughout the whole house of God's world.

I.

"These things have I spoken unto you, while yet present with you" (xiv. 25) :

Long ago King Solomon had asked, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? will God in very deed dwell with men?" (1 Kings viii. 27; 2 Chron. vi. 18.) This question was answered most wondrously in the lowly human life of Him who

had indeed lived in essential oneness with God "before the world was" (i. 1, xvii. 5), but now came and "dwelt as in a tent among us, full of grace and truth" (i. 14). It is true that this was but temporary—only the home-life of a moving tent—but, while it lasted, what blessed fellowship it brought to the disciples (1 John i. 1–3)! One of the first questions John had asked of Jesus was, "Where abidest Thou?" And, with thrilling recollection of that first glad hour of fellowship, he says, "They came therefore and saw where He abode; and they abode with Him that day" (i. 38, 39). This thought runs through the Gospel, and the Lord makes it the keynote of much of the teaching of this last discourse. Lest they should think the doing away of the tent-life meant the undoing of the companionship, He hints that there is to be something more permanent, more blessed, for He is going to one of the "abiding-places" in the "Father's house," and to the eternal home-life there He will receive them in a little while (xiv. 2, 3). He does not, He cannot, disparage the previous sojourn with them. "Have I been so long time with you?" (xiv. 9) He asked of Philip; and He lingers lovingly on the words, "while yet abiding with you," for they had been happy days to Him as well as to them.

But though this fellowship had been blessed, and blessed indeed would be the fellowship of the great future, yet that which was the intrinsic value of their communion and converse together was not the external companionship, but the inward union of hearts. And this union might and should continue, even during the temporary interruption of the outward fellowship. Just as He spoke of the Father "abiding" in Him (xiv. 10), so He urged them to "abide" in Him, that He likewise might "abide" in them (xv. 4); and He told how He and the Father would come and make their "abode" with the believing one (xiv. 23). This was to be by the indwelling of the Spirit of truth and love: "for He abideth with you, and shall be in you" (xiv. 17). To this same assurance He recurs in the words before us: He had spoken to them, just now and previously, many words of grace, but the Spirit should be their abiding Teacher, revivifying all Christ's words in their recollection, and guiding into all the truth (xiv. 26, xvi. 13).

II.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled" (xv. 11):

This was the time of their abounding sorrow,

but there was good reason for an abounding joy. He had indeed been the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. liii. 3); and so shortly He would have to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). Yet in His sorrow He rejoiced evermore, for His "meat" was to do the will of the Father, and to finish His work (iv. 34), and He was "straitened" till the baptism of suffering, without which His work could not be done, should be accomplished to the uttermost (Luke xii. 50). His joy, then, was the pure, consummate joy of devotion to God and man, and of sacrifice for man in the name of God; and such was the joy that His words were to kindle in the souls of the disciples. They should learn to rejoice even in their sufferings for the people's sake, and for Christ (Col. i. 24), and in the making known of His truth at whatever cost to themselves (Phil. i. 18); and, as He had rejoiced because the Father taught the world through Him, and made the powers of evil to fall confounded at His name (Luke x. 17, 18; 21, 22), so the disciples should rejoice because of this same conquering name of Christ, and because all help and inspiration were given to them of the Father for His sake (xvi. 23, 24; 33).

III.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be made to stumble" (xvi. 1):

Very grievous should be the maltreatment of the disciples at the hands of wicked men, men who knew neither God's nature nor the character of the Christ that revealed Him (xvi. 3; xiv. 9, 10), but who should persecute and seek to kill them in the very name of God (xvi. 2). Could they but realise that it was indeed for His sake they suffered, happy were they (Matt. v. 10; 1 Pet. iv. 14)! But oh, the peril to their faith, when, these things being done to the disciples in God's name, and the like things to other disciples afterwards in Christ's name, it should be sometimes so difficult to realise that they were indeed God's chosen ones, Christ's very own! For so largely the attitude and action of others towards us in the name of religion is, to our feelings, the measure of our own religious standing and work. Thus, to be forsaken of men may seem to us an indication that God has forsaken us, and the wrath of man towards us, in God's name, may seem to betoken God's wrath. Was it not so even with Christ Himself on Calvary, when, amid the awful darkness of the blackened heavens, a more awful

darkness fell upon His soul, shutting out the vision of the Father's face, so that He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 45, 46.) Therefore we need not wonder that frail disciples should be in danger of being made to stumble, when the desertion or persecution of men tempts them to think that God abhors them; nor if, because others scout the truths that we hold dear, their hold on our hearts should be in peril of loosening. But He has forewarned us; and, having told us before (xiii. 19, xiv. 29, xvi. 4), He has made it possible for us to walk firmly, even in the dark, to trust God though His face be hid, until the truth that we have held to, amid terrible questionings and temptations of doubt, shall be our own for ever—and the day shall declare it (1 Cor. iii. 13)!

IV.

"These things have I spoken unto you in figures" (xvi. 25):

Such were the figures just employed in the present discourse, as of the "Father's house" (xiv. 2), of the "way" (xiv. 6), of the "vine" (xv. 1), of the sorrow of "travail" (xvi. 21), and of the "seeing" them again after the "little while" (xvi. 16, 22). Such, too, was so large

a proportion of all the teaching of Christ ; for "He spake to them many things in parables . . . and without a parable spake He nothing unto them" (Matt. xiii. 3, 34) : suggestion, simile, symbol—by these He sought to win entrance for the truth into the minds of men. For the truth, thus partly hidden, would be received as a living seed, that should afterwards germinate and bring forth flower and fruit ; whereas, presented in its naked and unappreciated essence, it might have been altogether rejected and lost. Only spiritual experience can make spiritual truth real, and therefore, by mutual reaction, the truth must grow as we grow. But, when the way of the truth has been prepared by a teaching that partly conceals while it reveals, there shall come a time for direct spiritual intuition of its beauty, and for fuller revelation of divinest things by the Spirit of the indwelling God (xvi. 12-15, 23-27). And herein is that saying true, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance" (Matt. xiii. 12). "For the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. ii. 11, 12).

V.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye may have peace” (xvi. 33) :

The world offers, or rather gives, something so different from peace—“tribulation.” And this is all that Christ promises us for our portion in the world—tribulation. Many “good things,” even of this world, may be given, and often are given richly, but they are not promised with absolute assurance ; only as they may be vehicles for the communication of the best gift, the Spirit of God’s grace (comp. Matt. vii. 11, Luke xi. 13). Tribulation, however, we all shall surely have, for if sometimes prosperity, more often adversity, prepares for the advent of God to the soul. But this tribulation, after all, is not Christ’s gift—it is rather the world’s doing, overruled by Him for the disciples’ good. His gift, how different ! for, “not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (xiv. 27)—even as His legacy (*ibid.*) is not the same as the more flattering legacies of this world’s fortune. The gift, the legacy, of Christ is *peace*. So His first words and His last are one (xiv. 1, xvi. 33) ; and, breathing this ineffable peace upon their troubled hearts, He pauses, ere taking them, with Himself, in holy prayer, into the secret place of the peace of eternal God.

CHRIST GLORIFIED IN HIS PEOPLE.

JOHN xvii. 1-10.

ONLY a little while before, when the traitor had passed out into the night to do his deadly work, Jesus had said, referring to the death which He should die, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." But He added immediately, "And God shall glorify Him in Himself, and straightway shall He glorify Him" (xiii. 31, 32)—for, though the glory of the great self-sacrifice was one, and the glory of the exaltation was another, yet these two were one, the glory of the exaltation but manifesting to all worlds the intrinsic glory of the humiliation. It was not, therefore, as making haste to pass over and forget the sacrifice, but rather as longing for the time when its meaning should be so made known that it would do its work, that Christ said, on being told of the advent of the Greeks, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified" (xii. 23); and it is with the same longing that He now prays, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee."

Thus, while there shall be the actual glorifying in the heavens (ver. 5), yet the essential glorifying of Christ, by the Father and through the Spirit, shall be *in His people*. Of this our Lord indicates, in the words before us, three successive stages.

I. THE MANIFESTED NAME.

Looking back upon the work that He had done, quietly and assiduously, among His chosen disciples, He says, "I manifested Thy Name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world" (ver. 6). What Name? The name of "Father"—the very name with which the prayer begins, and which occurs, indeed, no fewer than fifty times in this farewell discourse and prayer (xiv.—xvii.). This name was of His making known, for the earlier revelation had not, save by implication, revealed it. To the Jews God had been the Holy One, and there was need enough that this aspect of God's character should be made prominent, if an unholy people were to be led to repentance for their sins. The law, with all its symbolical teaching, and with all its requirements, served more especially this purpose—to stamp in upon the consciences of the people that they must be holy like their holy God. Since, however, "the law made

nothing perfect," in Christ there was "a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God" (Heb. vii. 19). There was a charter of new freedom for the people in His words, "When ye pray, say, 'Father'" (Luke xi. 2); and to all time, in answer to the craving question of devouter souls, "Show us the Father," Jesus replies, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (xiv. 8, 9). He has "manifested" that divinest "Name."

II. THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

What was the result of His manifestation of the name of God? "Now they know that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are from Thee: for the words which Thou gavest Me . . . they received, and knew of a truth that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me" (vers. 7, 8). There is a reference here to the confession of faith which had just broken spontaneously from the disciples' lips (xvi. 30), and which gladdened the heart of Jesus, as signifying that His appointed work was now accomplished (ver. 4). For this was the result, long delayed, but at last mature and true—the result of all His gracious words and works: they knew, with the full assurance of faith, that He was God's chosen One, the

Redeemer of His people, the Messiah of the kingdom.

III. THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE.

To know God, as revealed by Christ, and to know Christ, who, in all the fulness of His human sympathy, should lead His people on to an ever-growing fulness of the knowledge of the eternal God—what was this but eternal life (ver. 3)? For to be in loving fellowship with the Divine is not indeed to forfeit the human, but it is to be lifted up, even here and now, above all the limitations and transiency of the human, and to have thus the pledge, within ourselves, of life for evermore. For God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living: *all live unto Him*” (Luke xx. 38). If He has taken us to Himself, that we may share the blessedness of His life, it is inconceivable that He should ever “cast us out” (vi. 37) into annihilation, or any gloom of desolate death. Jesus therefore anticipates eagerly the day when, not only these few disciples, but all who will let the Father draw them to Him (vi. 44), shall likewise receive this gift of life (ver. 2).

In all this, Christ is glorified in His people (ver. 10). For the manifested name of God is

the name which He has made known ; the assurance of faith, which will make His disciples strong, is wholly His work (see Heb. xii. 2) ; and the eternal life, which already begins to thrill them with its mighty pulsations, is of His giving—that He may be all in all !

CHRIST SANCTIFIED FOR HIS PEOPLE.

JOHN xvii. 11-19.

“**F**OR their sakes” (ver. 19)—how truly this was the keynote of all these closing words and acts of the Lord Jesus in His farewell with His disciples ! This, too, when it would have seemed so legitimate that He should be altogether engrossed with the thought of what was coming upon Himself. But this, indeed, was the keynote of all His life and work, of His weakness and suffering, and of His sacred death —“for their sakes.” So now, of that sanctifying of Himself, which had been progressive in its perfectness through all His life hitherto, and was about to culminate in the sacrifice of His death, He says, “*For their sakes* I sanctify Myself.”

I. THE SANCTIFICATION OF CHRIST.

All true sanctification is twofold, negative and positive. For it has reference to the sin which must be renounced and done with, and to the will of God which must be embraced and fulfilled. We see this twofold sanctification illustrated perfectly in Christ.

1. How close was His contact with the world's sin! And what exquisite pain this must have meant for Him, so sensitive to every touch of evil! Men may seek to sequester themselves, as hermits, that the sin of the world touch them not; but this was impossible to the Christ of God, whose very work necessitated constant and closest contact with "sinners." There was not, however, merely this passive contact of sin with the soul of Jesus, for it assumed the aggressive, pressing actively and maliciously upon Him, that it might conquer His integrity. Maliciously, and yet not always with obviously malicious intent; for sin came to Him most subtly, seeming to be good, and in the first great temptation He was plied with all its specious promises of good, if He would but compromise with the world, that His kingdom might win speedy success.

2. What was His victory? The Will of God—that Will, so strong and true, so good, so gracious. He clung to it, He lived by it, He lived for it; and it was this stronger that overcame the strong, this true that cast out the false, this good that rose supreme above the tempting evil. So in the desert He repudiated the suggestions of the tempter by the reiterated appeal to the will of God (Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10); and shortly in Gethsemane we find Him beating back the

assaults of "the power of darkness" by the reiterated prayer, "Father, not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke xxii. 42, 53). Of the whole of His life, in like manner, He could say, as speaking of His devotion to the will of God, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (viii. 29).

II. THE SANCTIFICATION OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE.

There had been struggle, and there was to be one short, sharp struggle more; but the conflict with sin was nearly over now, the sanctification of Christ accomplished: "I am no more in the world . . . I come to Thee" (ver. 11). How pathetic, however, in connexion with that same thought, is the remembrance of His disciples, and their danger: "These are in the world . . . Holy Father, keep them"! Indeed, it might seem natural that He should wish to remove them from such evil scenes; but no, for the world's sake, and for their own sakes, there must be the permission of their continuance in an evil world (ver. 15), and even a positive sending of the disciples into the midst of the evil (ver. 18). He cannot ask, He cannot wish, for any exemption of His people from the peril of temptation, or from such contact with sin as their work involves; but He does desire, and most

earnestly entreat, that they may be sanctified (vers. 11, 15, 17, 19).

1. If sin had pressed upon Him, should it not press upon them, with its solicitations and its menaces alternately? Far more perilously, indeed, upon them; for they could not say, as He said, "The prince of the world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (xiv. 30). Indeed, it was "the world" within them about which He was the most concerned—the world's spirit, of ambition, of jealousy, of disunion and strife, which they had but so recently exhibited; and for this reason He pleads, in asking for their sanctification, "that they may be one" (ver. 11).

2. If, however, sin should assail them, as it had assailed their Lord, was there not the same true, strong, loving Will of God for them, as for Him? The strength of this Will of the living God He had at last made their own (xvi. 30; vers. 4, 6–8, 11, 14, 17, 19), and in its "truth" they should find their true sanctification evermore. Their profession, as His disciples, pledged them to this (ver. 16), and the profession must prove itself real in the life.

We are taught by these words, not only that Christ's sanctification was for our sakes, but that our sanctification may be, not for us alone, but

for others. Our fellow-Christians shall find the sanctification of life easier or harder, according to our example and influence ; and as regards “the world ” we strive with, our very enmity towards its sin shall prove the truest friendship for itself.

“*THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.*”

JOHN xvii. 20-26.

THE last prayer of our Lord for His disciples was summed up in the one intense desire for their union with God, and their union with Him, the Christ of God, through whom alone God's gracious presence was brought near. His work was accomplished ; theirs was scarce begun. They were prepared for it, indeed ; for He had manifested God's name to them, and they had received His words of life. But now they must be left—left in the world of sin. Nay, more, He must send them, with all the impulsion of His strong command, into the very midst of the world's worst evil. In this evil, however, they shall live unstained, and the secret of their incorruption shall be devotion to the will of God. But, that they may be thus consecrated to God's service, and, as in embattled phalanx, may march to victorious war with the world's destroyer, *they must be one.* Otherwise, the world will mock their efforts, and repudiate their very profession of godliness, and they themselves will only too sadly lose the life of

God. "Keep them," He pleaded, "that they may be one" (ver. 11); and now, making intercession also for the larger discipleship of the coming years (ver. 20), He prays with intensest energy of desire, "that they all may be one" (vers. 20-23). This then is our Lord's last prayer—His prayer for us, His people; and, praying for our true unity of spirit and of life, He mentions at once its secret and its strength.

I. THE SECRET OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

The secret of the unity of the disciples of Christ is at the same time one and threefold.

1. Their spiritual life is sustained and nourished by the same one life of God: "even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be *in us*" (ver. 21). There may be the utmost diversity in the manifested life of Christians, even as the one life of nature exhibits variety of manifestation, almost without limit; but contrariety, to say nothing of deliberate antagonism, should be surely out of the question, even as it is indeed, when fairly faced, an intrinsic impossibility, in the relations of those who are all equally in God, through Christ.

2. Their life is penetrated and pervaded by the same Divine love: "that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them," is the

result of the revelation of that Fatherhood of God in which they have their common life (ver. 26). If life, of whatever sort, is unifying, how essentially unifying is the life of love ! Love is the great centripetal force of the moral universe ; and such love as that which constitutes the eternally reciprocal life of the Father and the Son, through the Spirit, is surely of all love the most sacredly binding and attractive. This love it is which inspires the love and fills the life of the fellowship of believers in Christ Jesus.

3. Their life grows and converges evermore round the same one Person of Christ : "I in them" (ver. 26). He "loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20)—when we once realise this mighty truth, not only are we drawn with resistless attraction to Him whose love is unspeakably more precious to us than all worlds, but, being drawn together by the same attraction towards Christ, we surely must find, in this sacred centre of our own best love and life, the true bond that binds all Christians into one.

II. THE STRENGTH OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

1. Its reflex power. All truth reacts upon him who lives truly, and makes him truer still ;

the true life of union with one another, for Christ's sake, reacts therefore upon the inward springs of the spiritual life itself, making it sweeter, stronger, truer day by day.

2. Its sympathetic power. The truth that is evidenced in one life tells upon all the associated life of the common discipleship ; the conquest of one is more or less the conquest of all, the strength of one means strength for others.

3. Its demonstrative power. While the individual, and the common, gain is great and precious, the gain that our Lord has now so largely in view, as He prays for the unity of His people, is the gain that will come to the world—the world for which He is not indeed just now praying (ver. 9), save indirectly, but for which He will pray even in death (Luke xxiii. 34), for which, even in its enmity, He will die (Rom. v. 6, 8, 10). How shall this unbelieving world be won from its unbelief? By the love of God in Christ Jesus, truly, but only as this love is made real to the world in the evident love of Christians one to another (vers. 21, 23)—only as they all are one in Christ.

Our union, then, in Christ shall be our “glory” (ver. 22) ; and such glory here prepares us for Christ's glory hereafter (ver. 24).

THE BETRAYAL.

JOHN xviii. 1-11.

THE words of the last discourse and prayer had been spoken, partly in the upper room where Jesus and His disciples had kept the Passover Feast, partly in some quiet spot among the vineyards on the way to the Mount of Olives. They had paused near to the Wady Kidron (or, as some seem to have called it, with a play upon the name, and perhaps because of the actual presence of such trees near by, "the ravine of the cedars": R.V., margin) ; and, when the last word is spoken, they pass over the brook-channel, and enter a familiar place of resort, "where was a garden" such as would afford some privacy and quiet for the bitter agony that now befell. The details, however, of this last conflict are passed over by the evangelist, as being already quite familiar to his readers through the narratives of the other Gospels, and he hastens on to those particular transactions of the great tragedy which fit in most impressively with the plan of his work. With this view he comes at once to the betrayal.

1. Quite unintentionally, and therefore the

more effectively, among the other contrasts of this Gospel, a contrast is presented to us between the betrayer and "the disciple whom Jesus loved," *i.e.* between the treachery of a false love and the devotion of the true. The betrayer is mentioned first in connexion with the supper at Bethany, at which the very sight of Mary's devotion arouses bitter resentment in his own false heart (xii. 4-6); and again in connexion with the supper in Jerusalem, at which his intended treachery is vaguely intimated to the disciples, and afterwards indicated more definitely to John: for the thought of it filled the Master's heart with sorrow, till, at last, when no word of warning and no mark of true affection could avail to prevent the deed of shame, Jesus sorrowfully gave him over to his sin (xiii. 2, 10, 11, 18, 19, 21-30). Now again he appears on the scene, having made all preparations for his fell work; for he "knew the place" as the likely spot for their retirement at this time, *and Jesus knew that he knew it*, so that His retirement thither, far from being an attempt to conceal Himself, was His own preparation for a death that should be, not merely compassed by the intrigues of treachery, but His own deliberate choice in accordance with the Father's will (x. 17, 18; xi. 51, 52; xii. 27, 28; xiii. 1-3, 33; xvii. 11-13).

2. "Behold how ye prevail nothing : lo, the world is gone after Him," had been the mortified exclamation of the Pharisees (xii. 19) ; and now we see "the world," by its chosen representatives, doing its best to murder Him who came to save the world. Thus there is treachery, not only of Judas to his Master and fellow-disciples, but of the world's leaders and agents to the world's own true interests. For the officers of the Sadducean priests and of the Pharisaic legalists combine with the cohort of the Roman procurator, Jews and Gentiles alike agreeing in this, "to do whatsoever God's hand and God's counsel fore-ordained to come to pass" (Acts iv. 27, 28). Where was "the truth," of which Jesus had already spoken so much (iii. 21 ; iv. 23, 24 ; v. 33 ; viii. 31, 32 ; xiv.-xvii. *passim*), to which indeed He came into the world to bear witness (i. 14 ; ver. 37) ?

3. As Jesus, however, had gone to the accustomed place of resort, although He knew that Judas would seek Him there, so now, as the measured tramp of the soldiers, with the more confused noise of the accompanying "multitude," betokens that the betrayer is at hand (Matt. xxvi. 46, 47), instead of waiting to be taken, as a snared victim, He steps forth to meet His captors, with the conscious royalty of One who

“came forth from God, and goeth unto God” (xiii. 3). When, in answer to His question as to whom they seek, they say “Jesus of Nazareth,” hardly knowing, in that startled moment, who it is that confronts them thus fearlessly, and He says again, in words that some of them remembered only too well (see viii. 24, 28, 58), “I AM,” “they went backward, and fell to the ground”—His manifest majesty overawing, overwhelming them (see vii. 45, 46). Thus He showed demonstratively that He was no mere victim of their treacherous hate, but a willing sacrifice for the sins of men.

4. “Judas, which was betraying Him, stood with them”—having carried out part of his plot, but being so embarrassed by the unexpected appearance of Him whom he came to “seek,” that for the while he failed to give the pre-concerted signal of the kiss (Mark xiv. 44), and perhaps fell with the others terror-stricken to the ground. Then coming forward, as one who plays a part, and giving the token of which now they had little need, having had that other self-given token of His power, Judas essays to complete the formalities of the betrayal, and perhaps also to hide his treachery under the guise of greeting ; but Jesus, waving aside at once his seeming friendliness and his unnecessary

falseness, delivers Himself over royally to His enemies, so that they are made to be the ministrants of His will.

5. While others are so untrue to Him, He will not be untrue to His own; and, as the crowd menace the disciples, more especially after Peter's well-meant but ill-advised attempt at defence, He—intercedes, shall we say? nay, rather commands, with the same quiet consciousness of authority, that the disciples be allowed to “go their way”; and so, left alone, as He had foretold (xvi. 32)—for in their panic they “all fled” (Matt. xxvi. 56, Mark xiv. 50)—He was taken to His death.

Thus “the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death” (James i. 15); death to others, as in this case, and the far worse death, to one's self, of all that is true and good.

FAITH'S FAILURE.

JOHN xviii. 12-27.

IT is not at all unreasonable to suppose that our Lord's persistent refusal to act in such a way as the disciples thought consonant with His Messianic mission and dignity led at once to the betrayal by Judas and the denial by Peter. But there is this essential difference, that whereas Judas hoped for the assumption of kingly honour on his own account, and was wickedly malicious when he saw that he was to be disappointed, Peter cherished the same hopes on his Master's account, and was utterly confounded when, at the critical moment of the arrest, Jesus let Himself be led away to death. So confounded was he, that at first he sought to repair the mistake by smiting with the sword ; but, when even this true loyalty of the disciple was declined, he knew not what more to do than thus to be willing to lay down his life for his Lord (xiii. 37), and is ready, in the sullenness of wounded love and bewildered faith, to say that he knows nothing of what the discipleship of Jesus means (see vers. 17, 25).

1. Both Peter and John had fled, with the other disciples, in the first few moments of panic ; but these two, at least, quickly recovered themselves, and "followed Jesus" as He was led away by His enemies. This was to incur great risk, more especially as they followed to the very palace of the high priest, and even entered within its precincts. There can be therefore no proper suspicion of cowardice on the part of either of them ; for John from this time was with his Lord to the very last, showing love's true devotion, and Peter, though lacking the comparative security that was afforded to his comrade by acquaintance with the high priest and his household, was now in no mood to save himself by flight, even when, by-and-by, the risk became very real. His inmost heart was true.

2. There was first an informal enquiry before a kind of committee of the Sanhedrim, Annas apparently presiding, and Caiaphas, whose counsel was already well known (xi. 49, 50 ; ver. 14), taking the chief part in the examination. This was conducted in one of the apartments of the high priest's palace, while the servants and temple-police waited in the central courtyard, warming themselves by a charcoal fire (see R.V., margin). Peter took his place,

with ill-assumed nonchalance, among them, John probably finding his way into the very room where the enquiry was proceeding. John's courage was his safety, whereas Peter, by his very attempt to remain unnoticed, attracted the observance of the bystanders. He was unmanned by the strange events of the last hour, and when all at once the maid who had admitted him into the courtyard caught sight of his face in the light of the fire, and challenged him as a disciple, Peter, embarrassed and confused, and perhaps thinking to himself that all discipleship was ended after such an inexplicable *dénouement*, denied the accusation ; and a second, and yet a third time, the challenge being taken up by others, and becoming hot and eager as the bystanders recognise, first this particular, then that, he denies with vehemence, even with passionate swearing, that he knows anything at all about the Man. Just then "the cock crew" the second time, and Jesus, perhaps on His way to the more formal meeting of the Sanhedrim, whither Annas was now sending Him for proper trial (ver. 24), caught the eye of the disciple, whose very denial He had but a little while since foretold (xiii. 38), and that one reproachful look, the more smiting because of its unutterable love, broke Peter's heart, and sent him out from the

scene of his shame, weeping bitterly (Matt. xxvi. 75 : comp. the accounts of the three Synoptists, especially that of Mark, which is practically Peter's own version of the failure of his faith).

3. Now, though this was no denial of mere cowardice, the very reason of Peter's sullenness being the refusal of Christ to let him fight in His behalf, yet was not the mortification of spirit which he was exhibiting an evidence that his faith in Jesus was not so true a faith as would stand the stress of bafflement and seeming contradiction? "*Do ye now believe?*" Jesus had asked, after the disciples' impetuous avowal of faith (xvi. 30, 31); for they believed, and yet they did not believe. "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be made to stumble," He had said (xvi. 1); yet here is the very foremost of them already stumbling, fallen, hurt. His faith failed for want of that very discipline and inspiration which would have been afforded, had he but watched with his Lord one hour, the while He Himself agonized with the contradictions of the powers of darkness (Mark xiv. 37, 38).

4. Nevertheless, the faith, though it failed, did not fail utterly. Jesus, in foretelling the conflict, foretelling also that Satan would seek to possess Peter as well as Judas (xiii. 27), had said, "I made supplication for thee, *that thy faith*

fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). And how different was his case from the case of Judas! He, when the hour of hopeless remorse came, "went away and hanged himself" (Matt. xxvii. 3-5), all true faith having been utterly broken long ago; but Peter's sorrow was not the sorrow of despair,—though there was indeed the overwhelming shame,—for all the past love of Christ, so strong, so changeless, was borne in upon his soul by that very look that broke his heart, so that the broken heart was ready for the healing. Let him mourn in secret, while the Lord is lost to His disciples after the last awful scene on Calvary; but, risen indeed, He shall appear to Simon (Luke xxiv. 34; comp. 1 Cor. xv. 5),—to *Simon first*, of the disciples, making haste to assure him of His love (1 Pet. i. 3),—and by-and-by He shall freely and fully reinstate him in his apostleship, and send him forth to serve, *and die* (xxi. 15-19).

To us, as to Peter, it is given, "not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf" (Phil. i. 29); but this is to the end "that the proof of" our "faith . . . might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7).

WHAT IS TRUTH?

JOHN xviii. 28-40.

PILATE was appointed procurator of Judæa A.D. 25, and soon became unpopular. He was severe, and to some extent wantonly cruel, in his treatment of the Jews, but not egregiously so, considering the general practice of Roman governors, and the proud and stubborn nation with which he had to deal. One great crime, however, darkens his name: his delivering of Christ to the Jews to be crucified.*

1. He comes before our notice, first, when the members of the Sanhedrim, having themselves condemned Jesus as worthy of death, carried Him away to the Roman governor to have their sentence confirmed. They probably hoped that he would give orders for their own decision to be carried out without more ado. But Pilate, as a Roman judge, knew better than to act in this lawless, uncereemonious way, and asked, "What accusation bring ye against this Man?"

* For very suggestive studies of Pilate's character, see Bible Dictionary, *in loc.*; Robertson's Sermons, vol. i., pp. 276-303; Hanna's "Last Day of our Lord's Passion," pp. 74-146.

(ver. 29.) They were vexed and irritated. They did not care to tell Pilate what their real grievance was, for they knew that he would have nothing to do with matters which he would look upon as touching their law only; and they had condemned Jesus because He said He was the Son of God (Matt. xxvi. 63-66). Therefore they answered petulantly, "If this Man were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered Him up unto thee" (ver. 30). "Very well," says Pilate, "if you think your own investigation and decision are quite enough without my help, doubtless your own carrying out of the decision will be quite enough too. Take Him yourselves, and execute sentence upon Him according to your law" (ver. 31). This was only to deride their impotence, for they had no power of life and death; and, unless he gave them authority, it would be impossible for them to go further with their work.

2. The accusers are, therefore, somewhat brought to terms, and, as they find they must formulate their accusation, they falsely transform the theological offence into one of a political nature. "We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He Himself is Christ a King" (Luke xxiii. 2): in other words, they declare

Him to be an avowed revolutionist. How their utter falseness is recoiling on themselves ! In order to gain any hearing with the hated Roman governor, they are obliged to impute to Christ's mission a meaning which they had vainly striven to force upon Him, entirely repugnant as it was to all His own desires and aims ; and they are compelled to prefer it as a false charge, when they would have been only too glad to fall in with it, had it been true. The hypocrisy of the affair is self-evident, and from this moment Pilate is predisposed in the Prisoner's favour. For He wore no marks of the lawless revolutionist ; and, if such had been His crime, the governor well knew that the Jews would never have arraigned Him on that behalf.

3. But how king-like He stands there, His dignified silence so in contrast with their clamorous vociferations ! "insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" (Matt. xxvii. 14). So now he holds a private conversation with the Prisoner, in the interior of the palace, away from the intrusive outcries of the Jews. "Art Thou the King of the Jews ?" he asks Him (ver. 33). If His only offence was in saying it, He can now deny ; if He be an enthusiast, He will probably reassert His claim. "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning

Me?" is the reply of Jesus (ver. 34): *i.e.* "Are you really seeking the truth on your own account, or merely repeating their hollow accusation?" For, if there was any sincere desire on the part of Pilate to know the truth concerning Him, even to the Roman governor He would proclaim Himself the Christ. But no, Pilate scouts the idea that he is a seeker after religious truth, especially as bound up with what he regards as the eccentric opinions and hopes of the Jews. "Am I a Jew?" he asks. "Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered Thee unto me: *what hast Thou done?*" (ver. 35.) That is, he would know whether there has been anything at all in the doings of this Jesus to give colour to their charge of political conspiracy and treason. And, when Pilate thus definitely expresses himself, Jesus at once disabuses his mind of any such notion as that He wished to be an insurrectionist, or a stirrer up of strife. "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence" (ver. 36). "Art Thou a King then?" Pilate asks; for his curiosity is stirred. There is something in the charge, evidently, whether of a dangerous character or not; and the quiet dignity of this Prisoner,

who talks so confidently about His kingdom, makes Pilate eager to know more. He shall know, if he will ; and the answer comes plainly and boldly : "Thou sayest, for I am a King ! To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice " (ver. 37).

4. Thus did the accused Jesus of Nazareth, in the presence of the representative of imperial Rome, announce Himself as possessed of a higher kingship than any which the rulers of Rome could boast ; for He was King of Truth, and all true hearts would acknowledge His claims, and do Him homage. But Pilate was not fitted to receive this saying ; he was not "*of the truth.*" Indeed, he misconceived the meaning of the very word employed, understanding by "truth" that which the speculative philosophers of Greece and Rome had been groping for, for ages past. He knew how often they had contradicted one another, and how school had succeeded school, each thinking to find "the truth," only to add, * as it seemed, to the general confusion, and unsettlement of all belief. Therefore he treated the whole thing with contempt. "What is truth?" he asked, half impatiently (ver. 38) : *i.e.* "What are all these idle speculations, which

end in nothing? what can such empty theories do practically for the world?" Then, not waiting for an answer, he left the Prisoner, went out to the Jews, and declared as the result of his examination, "I find no fault in this Man" (Luke xxiii. 4).

5. Of course this did not satisfy the Jews; "but they were the more urgent, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judæa, and beginning from Galilee even unto this place" (Luke xxiii. 5). Now opens out another scene in this strange drama. For at the mention of Galilee a new thought occurred to Pilate. It was an awkward business. The Jews were evidently bent on the death of Jesus, and he saw plainly that there was no desert of death. So, to save his conscience, and at the same time to save himself from the rancorous hatred of the Jews, he will send the Prisoner to Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, who was then visiting Jerusalem. But Herod only jeered at Jesus, and clothing Him, in mockery of His claims, with a white robe—the Roman sign of candidature for office—he sent Him back to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 8–11). Not, however, as one found guilty, for no charge had been substantiated. Therefore, to priests and people, Pilate again declares his conviction of the

Prisoner's innocence (Luke xxiii. 13-16). But, fierce as ever, they still clamour for His blood.

6. Pilate is baffled ; but in his perplexity he thinks he has hit on a new expedient for saving Jesus without compromising his own safety. Every year at this time it was the custom to set free some prisoner, and the people were allowed their choice. Now Pilate knew that some among the people felt persuaded of the innocence of Jesus, and he thought that, if he brought Him out side by side with a real insurrectionist and murderer, their own sense of justice would constrain them to ask that Jesus should be released. Barabbas and Jesus, then, were set forth together before the multitude, and, pointing to the brutal murderer and the King of truth, Pilate asked the people which of them should be set free. But the people, instigated by the priests, "cried out all together, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas" (Luke xxiii. 18). And, when Pilate asks, "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. xxvii. 22,) they shout, "saying, Crucify, crucify Him" (Luke xxiii. 21). Once more he asks, bewildered, "Why, what evil hath this Man done? I have found no cause of death in Him : I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" (Luke xxiii. 22). "But

they cried out exceedingly, Crucify Him " (Mark xv. 14).

Oh, should not Pilate's own question have been following him, with terrible irony, "What is truth?" What indeed, if the Roman judge, set to govern and judge truly, shall at once declare his unaltered conviction of the innocence of Jesus, and yet adopt expedient after expedient, either for ridding himself of responsibility for the case, or for saving the Prisoner by appeal to some other issue !

This solemn drama must go on to its darkest climax, Pilate's question still pursuing him with its scathing sarcasm, and the contrast between him and Jesus giving the whole world the answer, whether Pilate himself discerned it or not. "What is truth?" Truth is *being true* ; and the King of truth, who comes to make men true, would have made Pilate true—true to himself, and true to all sacred claims, Divine and human. But, "What is truth?" he asked impatiently ; and, "*What is truth?*" his conduct was echoing, in its utter falseness, as, step by step, he was, reluctantly but surely, delivering up Jesus to the will of His enemies.

BEHOLD THE MAN!

JOHN xix. 1-16.

THE case with which Pilate had to deal was growing desperate. He quite expected that the last stratagem would succeed, but the priests had thwarted him ; and now, seeing that they were determined on the death of their victim, he takes water, in imitation of their own Jewish custom, and, washing his hands before the multitude, says, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous Man : see ye to it." They recognise the significance of his act, but are eager enough to accept the responsibility which Pilate thus throws upon them : "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 24, 25).

Now, therefore, the governor adopts his last expedient. He acts as if he were about to accede to their request : "Pilate took Jesus, and scourged Him" (ver. 1). This was partly to appease their anger, partly to stir up their pity. For scourging was a fearful punishment. The victim was bound to a pillar, and blows were laid on the naked back, with all the strength of

which strong men were capable, until "all the body was one wound." Beneath such ruthless punishment the victim frequently fainted, sometimes died. Thus was Jesus treated. And when, bleeding profusely from the cruel strokes, and decked out in a scarlet cloak, with the sharp prickles of the thorn-wreath crushed down upon His brow, He was at last brought forth to the people, a spectacle of innocent suffering which Pilate thought must surely melt the hardest heart, "Behold the Man," he said, pushing Him forward to their view. But the fiend-like rage of the chief priests and officers is still unmoved, and "Crucify ! crucify !" is still their savage cry (vers. 2-6).

"Behold the Man"—this points the unintended contrast between himself, the untrue one, and Jesus, the King of truth. "How little he understood his own words ! That 'Ecce Homo' of his sounds over the world and draws the eyes of all generations to that marred visage. And lo, as we look, the shame is gone ; it has lifted off Him and fallen on Pilate himself, on the soldiery, the priests, and the mob. His out-flashing glory has scorched away every speck of disgrace, and tipped the crown of thorns with a hundred points of flaming brightness." *

* Stalker's "Life of Jesus Christ," p. 126.

I. THE SHAME.

Was not this a picture of Pilate's unutterable shame? By his own confession, Jesus was entirely innocent; therefore the judge's duty was clear—he must release the Prisoner at all risks. Instead of this, however, he not only resorts to expedient after expedient with the view of bringing about the release of Jesus apart from his own direct and peremptory action, but at last, with the hope indeed of effecting his purpose in the same shifty and dishonest way, yet most unrighteously, he inflicts the dreadful suffering and shame of scourging on One in whom he is sure there is no fault! “*What is truth?*” How the fiends of hell are mocking at this travesty of justice!

But, from Pilate's own view, what can now be done? He is not only disappointed, but mortified. These hated Jews are determined to baffle him. So he throws out the angry retort, “Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him” (ver. 6); as much as to say, “You are so determined to have your own way, have it, if you think you can, without my sanction: go, put your victim to death, if you dare.” This was to make them once more feel their impotence (see xviii. 31). His words have their effect.

Therefore, as Pilate persists in rejecting their political accusations as groundless, they fall back on the theological offence which has hitherto been kept in the background. "Whatever you may say as to the charge of insurrection, He has broken our religious law : He made himself the Son of God ! He is a blasphemer, and our law punishes blasphemy with death " (ver. 7).

This saying stirs new feelings in Pilate's mind. Already he has been struck with the calm superiority of Jesus to the malice of His enemies, and now he begins to fear that there may be some sort of truth in His claim to deity. With some awe, therefore, he re-enters the prætorium, and asks the strange claimant-King, "Whence art Thou ?" But there is no reply. "Speakest Thou not unto me ? knowest Thou not that I have power to release Thee, and have power to crucify Thee ?" And Jesus answers, "Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath greater sin " (vers. 8-11). Pilate does not understand all the meaning of these words ; but what is said of supernatural power, and the reminder that some one is sinning in arraigning Jesus there, only deepens his awe, and confirms yet more his conviction that this Just One must be set at liberty.

He determines to act on this conviction, and set Jesus free.

Pilate comes forth to the Jews with this determination. He announces it; and they see it on his face. This, however, only makes them more determined still; and they bring forth their last weapon, reserved till now, the fear of which, indeed, had made Pilate vacillate so long: they will accuse him to Cæsar! The reigning Cæsar, Tiberius, was a jealous and suspicious man, quite predisposed to listen to charges against his officers; and Pilate's administration will not bear scrutiny. There only wants the clamour of the popular voice against him, with the preferment of some plausible charge by those in high places, and he may be disgraced. He is not prepared for this risk. His place and his power he must hold, at any price. It is an awkward dilemma. Here is the innocent Jesus, who may be moreover the exalted One that He claims to be; Pilate would like to save Him. Indeed, he knows that it is unjust and cruel to give Him up to His enemies. But his own power, nay, possibly his very life, is in peril, should he incur still further the hatred of the Jews. So, against his own convictions, against his own better feelings, "he delivered Him unto them to be crucified," having first, however, in

savage vengeance, extorted from the Jews a loud renunciation of their own most cherished hopes (vers. 12-16).

What shame upon Pilate—and all, to save himself from shame ! And what utter shame on these Jews, so hating the very truth itself, that on that day they deliberately committed national suicide, protesting their loyalty to the hated Roman power ; and all because of their hell-born abhorrence of that divinest love, which shone even now from the mangled, bleeding Jesus, and which alone could give them a kingship that should consummate their national history !

II. THE GLORY.

We have been already reminded more than once that the “glory as of the only begotten from the Father,” which the disciples beheld (i. 14), was not so much the splendour as of One who belonged to the eternal heavens, and while on earth must make His heavenly dignity and power known, as the yet diviner beauty of willing humiliation, and even eager sacrifice, for the sake of those whom love brought Him into the world to save. “Full of grace”—yes, that was His glory. What, then, if the exigencies of His career necessitated His living a life of

poverty and privation, being misunderstood by friends, and slandered and bitterly persecuted by foes, and having at last, as it might seem, to forgo the very success of His mission, rather than impair the sanctity of the spiritual salvation that He brought to men, and imperil the reality of the work of God? In this case, the heavenly glory of the Only-Begotten said to Him, "Be true!" What if, at last, though having all power, and able to summon to His help legions of angels, He must, if He would be loyal to the higher supremacy of spiritual principle, allow His haters and blasphemers to lead Him away, in their unholy exultation, that they may make mock-trial of His claims, and let Him be blindfolded, and buffeted, and spit upon? Still the voice of the glory said, "Be true!" And what if, when the Jews have dragged Him to the Gentile judgment-seat, the whole world, as thus represented, just as though He were an enemy and not a Friend and Saviour, sets Him forth, covered with utmost ignominy, bleeding, torn, almost dying, and thus doomed to death, when perhaps one word of recantation, even now, might save Him? The heavenly glory says to Him still, "Be true!" And the King of truth is true to the last—true in life, true in death—for God's sake, for His people's sake. "Full of

grace *and truth*” (i. 14)—this is the truest glory of God’s Only-Begotten, here and hereafter, now and evermore !

Thus Christ, and the Jews, and Pilate—all must choose, and we must likewise choose, between the glory and the shame, the truth of duty or the falseness of sin, the hate or love of that which is divinely good. Christ chose before Pilate’s bar ; Pilate and the Jews were choosing before Christ’s bar ! For, though He came not to judge, His very presence was perforce a judgment (iii. 17, 18 ; viii. 15, 26, 50 ; xii. 47, 48). Before Christ’s unseen tribunal we are choosing, and therefore judging ourselves, every day. But this very choosing involves the possibility of *truth* ; and just as Pilate might have been a true man thenceforth, in spite of Jews and Cæsar, so may we be true, true in heart and life to all sacred claims of God and man ; and so at last shall we be acknowledged by the King of Truth as His chosen ones, when He cometh in His glory !

"IT IS FINISHED."

JOHN xix. 17-42.

THE end had come. Through all the tragic narrative of this chapter, and more especially from ver. 17 onwards, there rings the great *Τετέλεσται* that broke from our Lord's dying lips as He yielded up His spirit (ver. 30). As we stand reverently by the cross, and watch the last anguish there, while we see indeed the minor accompaniments of the awful drama—the affixing of the half-serious, half-mocking trilingual title to the cross, the light-hearted sharing of the garments by the soldiers, the pathetic entrusting of the broken-hearted mother to the beloved disciple, the lifting of the sponge of vinegar to the hot, parched mouth, and afterwards the unthinking, but significant, piercing of the Saviour's side—yet one thought absorbs the mind, even as it absorbed His mind, so commanding in its supreme importance that all others for the time may well be almost forgotten: It is finished! And, as we join with Joseph and Nicodemus in laying Him reverently to rest, this same thought, far more surely than the futile precaution of His enemies (Matt. xxvii. 66), seals the sepulchre.

We are thus led to regard the Lord's death as a great fulfilment ; and this threefoldly.

I. IN RELATION TO HIS OWN CAREER.

1. What busy, pressing, exhausting work had filled His life ! what war, with implacable enemies, had worn and seemingly wasted it away ! Unresting toil, incessant conflict—these were the marks of that ministry of peace. The night, that brings rest to the toiler and respite to the warrior, often brought no repose to Him ; and even the Sabbath, God's own appointed pause in the midst of the world's activities, was for Him, as for God Himself, filled with the work of doing good (v. 17). But death, which brings rest to all, brought rest at last to Jesus : His unresting earthly career was ended ; the work and the warfare were finished.

2. But not in the sense of mere termination did Christ speak that great *τετέλεσται*, for, as we have been already more than once reminded, with Him to finish was to fulfil (see iv. 34, v. 36, xvii. 4). The longest life is not necessarily the completest life, for mere length of days may be but a meaningless sequence of aimless days. The complete life is the life that is filled full of earnest significance, instinct with large and sacred aims, and at last brought not only to a

close, but to a fitting close, the aims being all accomplished, and the significance of the life finding its climax in death. So it was with Jesus. The work and the warfare of His life were alike completed, and all His life's significance was perfected in death.

II. IN RELATION TO GOD'S PURPOSES FOR THE WORLD.

In writing to a Gentile people, who were even morbidly interested in the religious history of the Jews, the Apostle Paul said that, after the two-fold preparatory history of Jews and Gentiles, "the fulness of the time came" (Gal. iv. 4)—the *πλήρωμα*, *i.e.* the finishing, perfecting fulfilment. And the death of Christ, with its world-significance, sounded this fulness of the time for all men.

1. For the Gentiles. Among them there was, in many ways, a preparatory work of God. What were those curious and eager studies of the Greek philosophers, that to Pilate seemed utter folly, but a cry in the night for the unknown God? And the great system of Roman law, in which probably Pilate took some pride, though he so pitiably inverted all its majesty in his dealings with the Just One, was not that an unconscious attempt to trace the ways of the

everlasting Righteousness? So, too, the tragic poems of the ancients, with their teachings of retribution and remorse, and the almost universal system of sacrifice, were a tacit acknowledgment that sin, if it is to be properly forgiven, must be atoned.

2. For the Jews. While God had seemed to leave the Gentiles to find these things out for themselves, though secretly He was their Teacher and Guide, with what explicit and emphatic revelation had He taught the Jewish people! To them He was no unknown God, for the I AM had entered into sacred covenant with them, and Jehovah was their King. They were not left to spell out His will, as in the dark, for He Himself spake the words of the law of righteousness amid all the palpable solemnities of Sinai. "And according to the law . . . all things" were "cleansed with blood," these imperfect symbols teaching the need of a better sacrifice (Heb. ix. 22, 23). In the law, then, there was an elaborately organized foretokening, and in the prophets a sometimes ambiguous and sometimes startlingly clear foretelling, of the despised and rejected One, the Man of sorrows, who should pour out His soul unto death, having borne the sin of many (Isa. liii. 3, 12).

The time of waiting, however, for Gentiles and

for Jews, was ended, and the meaning of their long history was fulfilled, as the Lord of all said, "It is finished." And the savage irony of Pilate, intended for the mockery of the Jews even as through the agony of their victim, might well be blazoned forth among all the nations, telling that the Crucified Jesus was their true and lawful King.

III. IN RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE.

1. Potentially, all is finished, for the justification of every sinner, in the sacrifice of Christ. "Now once for all hath He . . . put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26), so that there needs no other, no supplementary, expiation; there is place for no other.

2. Actually, for all penitent ones, *i.e.* for all who put themselves ethically in sympathy with His death, there is a finished atonement, a perfect justification; and, abiding beneath the shadow of the Cross, they ever hear Him say, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke vii. 48).

Be it ours to watch, and wait, and pray, making all the meaning of the Lord's death our own, and by our faithful witnessing to make it known to others, that we too, like Him, may say with our last breath, "It is finished."

THE LIVING ONE.

JOHN xx. 1-18.

WE pass now, with wondrous transition, from the awful gloom of Calvary, and the dead helplessness of the sepulchre, to the sweet sunshine of the world's first Easter Day, and the strong victory of the Living One.

I.

Mary Magdalene had come with the other women to the sepulchre (comp. Matt. xxviii. 1, Mark xvi. 1, Luke xxiv. 1), but, while they tarried there in wondering perplexity, she hastened to tell Peter and John that the Lord was taken away. These disciples, whose hopes were buried in that grave, but who, for that very reason, would guard its sacred contents with jealous care, "ran both together . . . toward the tomb" (vers. 3, 4). John's eager love outstrips the speed of Peter, but his courage fails him as he arrives at the place of death; so that only timidly does he peer into the darkness, behold the white gleam of the linen cloths, and draw back again. Peter, however, knows

no such fear as this ; he is not sensitive to the awful weirdness of the tomb ; and he therefore enters in boldly. What does he discern ? That the body is gone, as the women had said ; but not by any removal, whether on the part of enemies or of friends. For “ he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself ” (vers. 6, 7). And the appearance of the cloths and the napkin was such that Peter, and John likewise, who soon joined Peter there, “ *believed* ” (ver. 8) —believed *that Jesus had risen!* For till now they had no thought of His rising again, in spite of all that He had said (ver. 9).

But what was there in the condition of the grave-gear that at once compelled this unprepared faith ? Most commentators take for granted that the appearance of the linen, as having been carefully wrapped together and laid by, indicated that there had been no mere removal of the body—for then why undo the cerements at all ? or, in any case, why so leisurely and orderly a laying of them aside ?—but that Jesus, rising from death, had now no need of the habiliments of the dead, and that therefore their very presence in the sepulchre betokened that its former Occupant was risen indeed. There

is some force in these arguments, but they are hardly strong enough to explain the immediate faith which the first sight of the grave-linen occasioned, nor do they explain at all the significant and emphatic mention of the head-napkin as "rolled up in a place by itself"; while if, with some others, we take it that the disciples merely believed in the removal of the body, we are left with a very lame conclusion, and the reference to the head-cloth is equally uninterpreted. The only satisfactory exposition of this part of the resurrection-narrative is that given by Grimley, following the suggestion of an essay on "The Parable of the Graveclothes" (by the Rev. Arthur Beard), as follows:—
"John stooped and saw [*βλέπει*] the linen clothes lying on the ledge: he simply saw that they were so lying. Then Peter came up and went into the sepulchre, and saw, *i.e.* attentively observed [*θεωρεῖ*], the linen clothes as they were lying. And, as he thus attentively observed, he noticed that the napkin, which had been about our Lord's head, was not lying like the linen clothes, but was wrapped up, or wrapped about, in one place. It was lying apart from the linen clothes, separated from them by the space where before the neck had lain, and was still wrapped, or wrapped about, as though still enveloping

the head of our dear Lord. When Peter had attentively observed these things, John came into the sepulchre and beheld [*εἶδεν*]*—i.e.* beheld and understood—and believed. He understood, not simply because the body of the Lord was absent from the sepulchre, but because he saw the Resurrection proclaimed by the graveclothes themselves. He saw that the graveclothes were still lying almost as they would have lain had they still been enswathing the body of our Lord. And, seeing the linen clothes so lying, as if around the body, and the napkin so wrapped, as if about the head, he at once understood that our Lord had risen from the dead. . . . As He withdrew, the linen clothes fell—collapsed—but were not disordered. The embalming spices bore down the graveclothes, and caused them to lie somewhat flattened upon the rocky ledge. The napkin had not collapsed, but was still wrapped, as it had been before our Lord mysteriously rose from the dead.” *

Gently and mightily the Lord withdrew
 His spirit-body from the linen clothes
 That swathed His lifeless limbs, and, when He rose,
 The napkin which enwrapped His forehead too
 Lay undisturbed; and well the apostles knew
 That He had slipped His cerements.†

* Grimley's "Tremadoc Sermons," pp 23, 24.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 276, 277.

II.

The disciples had probably reached the tomb, and left it again, before Mary returned, so that she knew not the glad conviction that had been borne in upon their minds. Nor had she heard of the "vision of angels" which the other women had seen, after she hastened from them to the city (Matt. xxviii. 5-8, Mark xvi. 5-8, Luke xxiv. 4-9, 22, 23), perhaps without going on to the tomb itself, when they saw, from afar, that the stone had been rolled back (Mark xvi. 3, 4).

But the weeping Mary, broken-hearted for her dear Lord's death, and now doubly bereft because the very sight of the dear dead body is denied her, shall soon be comforted. What wondrous sight is this that she sees within the tomb? and what are the meaning looks that these angelic visitants cast behind her? She turns, and at first sees only "the gardener." But one word unseals her vision of the Living One.

For, while I lay there, sobbing, at His feet,
The word He spake—my Lord! my King! my Christ!
Was my name: "MARY!"*

And that one word changed her death to life.

* "The Light of the World," by Sir Edwin Arnold, p. 288.

She might not touch Him, for the glad fellowship, which was to be meanwhile a fellowship of spirit, might not be till after His ascension to the Father. But soon He will ascend, and then He will see them all again, and their joy shall be full (xvi. 22). That vision, and that joy, are ours !

LORD OF ALL.

JOHN XX. 19-31.

THE Risen Lord had appeared first to Mary Magdalene, then to the rest of the women, and in the evening “to Cleopas and another disciple, perhaps Luke (?),” * and also to Peter, who most of all needed one personal word of love to restore him to new hope and life. Then, when the disciples—*i.e.* apostles and other believers—were gathered together, most likely in the same upper room in which they had so lately heard the farewell words (see Luke xxiv. 33), all wonderment and expectation, “Jesus came.” He was not now trammelled by the limitations of this earthly life, though He had not yet wholly past out of it; and therefore, closed as the room was, and unable as they were, unable as we are, to account for the sudden appearance, He all at once—He, of whom all were speaking, of whom all hearts were full—“stood in the midst.”

I. THE WORD OF PEACE.

They were already in a tremor of intense

* Milne's “Life of Christ,” p. 55.

excitement ; His sudden appearance, while it partly gladdened, partly terrified them ; and they were disturbed, moreover, by the remembrance of all their unbelief. What will He say to them—He, the glorious One, the true King, whose glory had been so undiscerned by them, and to whose Kingship they had been so untrue ? Oh, they are ready for any upbraidings ; they will acknowledge, so contritely, how they deserve all worst reproaches. But—can they believe it ? —the word that so sweetly thrills upon the startled air, the word of His first greeting as the Risen One, is the same as that farewell word, spoken in the self-same room, the echoes of which had yet hardly died away (xiv. 27) : *Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν* (“ Peace to you ”) ! It is the same voice as of old ; the same love breathes through its accents ; and “ the prints of love ” are there—the wounded hands and side ! His mighty peace possesses every soul, their tumult of feeling giving place to the hush of a holy calm.

II. THE MINISTRATION OF LIFE.

But not for their own sakes alone had He appeared to them. His work was finished (xix. 30) ; and yet it was but begun. These men and women must continue it, or the salvation cannot be for the people, and for the wider world

beyond. Again, therefore, and with emphasis, He repeats His greeting; but not as a mere greeting, nor only as allaying their individual fears. For they have "received the reconciliation" (Rom. v. 11), that they may exercise "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v. 18), and this in the name of Him who was "wounded for our transgressions" (Isa. liii, 5), but whose very presence now said, as it thrilled them with its living energy, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (xiv. 19). To preach a wounded, a dying Jesus would of itself avail the world nothing; but to tell of One "who was delivered up on account of our trespasses, and was raised on account [and in token] of our justification" (Rom. iv. 25), proclaiming Him as "the Living One," who "became dead," and is now "alive unto the ages of the ages" (Rev. i. 18)—this is to preach reconciliation indeed, this is to minister life to mankind in His name. In virtue of this life from the dead, then, He has "the keys of death" (Rev. i. 18); and, if these disciples will only receive the meaning of that life from death, as He breathes it now into their very souls, then its glad significance, as manifest through them, shall bring remission of sins to men, with all the force of Christ's own remission—or, as rejected and hated, shall be for the retention of

men's sins, His very life, thus resisted, sealing their doom of death. (See Robertson's Sermons, vol. iii., pp. 61-76.)

III. THE TRUE FAITH.

Thomas, true in heart, but perplexed in faith, having been absent when the Lord appeared, refuses to believe that One, whose very death-wounds, so terribly imprinted on his horror-stricken gaze, have been only too vividly present to memory ever since, is really alive, despite those wounds ; and only the actual touching of them will convince him that the Lord is risen, as they say. He shall touch, if he will ; for a true heart Christ will always meet half-way, that He may lead on the faith from less to more. But no, the disciple seeks no longer thus to convince himself, when once he has seen the Lord ; for all the power of that Lord's life makes itself felt, and is now its own demonstration, so that under its inspiration Thomas rises to the very height of attesting faith : " My Lord and my God ! " Ah ! well was it for him that he thus felt the power of Christ, when he but looked upon Him ; but better far for myriads, to whom such vision is impossible, that, feeling His inward power when others bear their testimony to His living truth and love, they likewise

believe, for, thus believing, they “rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable” (1 Pet. i. 8) !

Such faith, such joy, may be ours ; and John’s Gospel, as he tells us (vers. 30, 31), will have served its best purpose, if it so sets forth the Christ to us, and through us to others, that we, that they, believe, and, believing, have life.

LOVE'S DEVOTION.

JOHN xxi.

THERE is an interesting picturesqueness in the scene described at the opening of the narrative: the morning sun just breaking through the darkness on the eastern hills (ver. 4, R.V.), beginning to gleam upon the water, and partially illumining the figure of the Stranger on the beach; while the voice of that same Stranger, now kindly questions the fishermen after their fruitless toil, and now directs them so that their toil becomes fruitful beyond their largest hopes. Had they perhaps been seeking to make converts, but as yet in vain, among their fellow Galilæans, and were they, in their discouragement, tempted to relinquish the work, and return to their old calling? He would teach them that the first calling (Matt. iv. 18-22) is not annulled—they are still to be “fishers of men”; but that only under His guidance can they hope for true success (Matt. xxviii. 18-20: comp. Acts ii. 41-47).

Nor is there any diminution of beauty in the scene that follows this manifestation of Jesus to the disciples (ver. 1, R.V.). For after the

intuition of love has discerned the Friend in the seeming stranger, and the impetuous zeal of Peter has given the signal for the whole company to hasten to their Lord (vers. 7, 8), we see Him, as aforetime (vi. 10-13; Luke xxii. 14-20), dispensing gracious hospitality to those whom He would teach to find satisfaction for themselves and strength for their service by becoming "partakers of Christ."

But the climax of interest is reached in the Lord's converse with the repentant Peter. He had protested his undying devotion to his Master (Matt. xxvi. 35)—he had nevertheless so soon denied that Master, even with cursing and swearing (Matt. xxvi. 74)—he had already been assured of the free and full forgiveness of his sin (see pp. 260, 288), and was overflowing with grateful affection to Him who forgave one so unworthy, his very zeal to be the first to reach Jesus betokening the ardour of his love: now he is probed, tenderly but keenly, as to the trueness of that love. He had thrice denied, he is thrice questioned; the very repetition and emphasis of the questioning being intended to lead him to look closely into his own heart, that he may ask himself whether his love is now more genuine than before.

The character of Peter was such that it was

very necessary he should be brought to reflection and consideration. He was one of those whose religion is in danger of consisting too exclusively of mere feeling. He was an impulsive man, and with his impulsiveness somewhat unstable. Hence the searching look with which Jesus met his gaze at their first interview, and the significance of His words, "Thou art Simon ; thou shalt be Peter" (i. 42 : see exposition, p. 20). He is in process of transformation from Simon, the man of affectionate impulse, to Peter, the apostle of true devotion, even now ; for Jesus, who knew him so well, and loved him so much, is dealing with him, firmly but kindly, that out of weakness He may make him strong. And, from Christ's treatment of Peter, we learn the essential nature of love to Christ, and its true results.

I. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF LOVE.

Love, then, does not consist essentially of feeling, but of resolute and steadfast devotion. What was the intention of the thrice-repeated questioning ? To lead the disciple to look deeper down than where the present eager impulse of affection stirred him, even into his inmost spirit. He is ready enough to reply, when, without thought, he lets himself be prompted merely by

the surface feelings of his soul ; but Christ would have him search, far beneath them, into the foundation principles of character, into the attitude and temper of the will. Not that the will alone constitutes the love, for all the functions of man's spiritual nature work inseparably, and neither the discernment of intelligence, nor the warmth and grace of affectionate feeling, may be sacrificed without grievous loss ; but, if the will be not steadfast, if the permanent principles of character be wanting, then thought and emotion alike will fail to give proper worth to love : there may be affection, but there will not be true devotion.

Now all this comes out clearly and strongly in the conversation between Christ and Simon Peter ; though unfortunately our English version entirely fails to reproduce the significant variations of language which characterize the original, and apart from which we cannot fully learn the lesson that the record is intended to convey. For two words are used, not interchangeably, but with exact discrimination, where we read, alike in the Authorised and in the Revised translation, the same English word, "love" ; and the one word, used invariably by Peter in his answers, and used the third time by our Lord in His questioning, signifies the love of affectionate

feeling, while the other word, used by our Lord in His first two questions, but which Peter cannot presume to appropriate, in view of his recent fall, is more properly indicative of the love of loyal devotion.

Let us listen to this sacred dialogue in detail. "When therefore they had breakfasted, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, art thou really more devoted to Me than these men are?'" For he had certainly seemed to assume a superior devotion, especially when he said, "If all shall be offended in Thee, I will never be offended" (Matt. xxvi. 33). Ah! he remembers these words, and how he belied them. So that in his reply he makes no mention of the others; the tone of boastful assumption is impossible after the experiences of that Friday morning; and as to devotion of any sort he will make no profession now. "He saith unto Him, 'Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee.' He saith to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, art thou devoted to Me?'" *i.e.* at all, to say nothing of comparison with the rest. "He saith unto Him, 'Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee.'" But now comes the worst probing of all, making the disciple wince for very pain: "He saith unto him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, art thou even

attached to Me?'" For the more superficial love that consists in feeling soon loses all its reality and worth if the underlying devotion fails; so that Peter might well ask himself whether the fervour of attachment was of the genuine sort, if the principle of loyalty was so easily shaken. But this is more than he can bear; for, if the loyalty had been shaken, it was only under the evil temptation of the moment, and he is sure that all his best feeling goes out strongly and warmly to Jesus. "Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, 'Art thou attached to Me?'"—not because of a third questioning, but because the question took this form, as though his very affection was suspected. "And he said unto Him, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou seest that I am attached to Thee.'" And the cessation of enquiry is a tacit acknowledgment of the reality of the affection, and therefore of the true, though imperilled, devotion, without which affection itself could not live.

II. THE TRUE RESULTS OF LOVE.

Following every reply of the disciple, however, there is a command; as much as to say that, if the love be true, it must prove itself by true results.

1. "If thou lovest Me, feed My little lambs": for perhaps Peter was one of the foremost to rebuke the mothers who brought their little ones to Jesus, and in other ways it had not been easy for him to stoop to that which was lowly (Mark ix. 33-37, x. 13-16). He is taught that all who are, in any sense, little ones and lowly he must assiduously care for and nourish (see 1 Pet. ii. 2, v. 5).

2. "If thou lovest Me, shepherd My sheep": for he had been forewarned that, when himself restored, he must strengthen and establish his brethren (Luke xxii. 31, 32), who, like him, were liable to fall, to stray. He is taught that this must be one chief mission of his life, to bring back wandering ones to the Shepherd of their souls (see 1 Pet. ii. 25).

3. "If thou lovest Me, feed My dear sheep": for the elder and seemingly stronger ones needed not only tending, but nourishing, equally with the little lambs. He himself has satisfied his soul with the love of his true Lord; let him minister that love evermore to others, that they may grow and be strong in the same grace (see 1 Pet. ii. 3; 2 Pet. iii. 18).

Right well did he learn the lesson; in his heart he is learning it now. Therefore Jesus

bids him do what not long since He declared to him he could not do : " Follow Me " (ver. 19 ; xiii. 36, 37). Peter should die for his Master, die like his Master. And John, his comrade, who follows them wistfully, shall he die for his Master ? Let Peter be content with his own sacred calling ; for, if it be John's calling to tarry, to live long rather than die early for his Lord, " What is that to thee ? follow thou Me." So, indeed, the beloved disciple did live and linger, till the voice he longed for called him home. But Jesus was " coming," the while ; his Lord was with him " all the days " (ver. 22, note ; Matt. xxviii. 20, R.V.).

O holy trust ! O endless sense of rest !
Like the beloved John
To lay our head upon the Saviour's breast,
And thus to journey on ! *

* Longfellow's " Hymn for My Brother's Ordination."

NOTES :
CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 3, 4.—A remarkable variation of reading occurs in this place, of high textual authority, and supported by several of the foremost modern critics, among whom Westcott and Hort adopt it into their text. It consists in the placing of the period before, instead of after, ὁ γέγονεν, and thus reading (as in the margin of the R.V.), “without Him was not anything made. That which hath been made was life in Him,” etc. But, as Dr. Hort remarks, “the punctuation of MSS., versions, and Fathers has no textual authority, being only an embodiment of ancient traditions, not a part of the transmitted text; and the [alternative] construction has high claims to acceptance on internal grounds” (“The New Testament in Greek,” by Westcott and Hort, vol. ii., pp. 73 and 74 of Appendix). Indeed, the internal evidence would surely seem almost conclusive; for how could it be truly said, of the “all things” that were made, that “that which was made *was life* in Him”? Only of “some things” is this true; and if we abide by the construction of the A.V., and of the text of the R.V., we have presented to us the gradations of the creative work—as pointed out in the exposition—*viz.* “all things,” all “life,” and the divinely-lighted moral life “of men.”

Ver. 9.—For the various permissible renderings

of this verse see A.V., R.V., and R.V. margin. Perhaps the text of the R.V. gives the meaning which best suits the context: "John was not the Light itself, but only the witness of it. There was the true Light—which indeed is, and always has been, the Light of all men, in the way of inward illumination—now coming visibly into the world: and of this advent John was herald and witness."

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 4.—Literally, "What to Me and thee, woman? not yet has My time come." But, as we have no colloquial use of the term "woman" corresponding to the usage of the Greek, it is impossible for us to render the word literally without conveying an implication of harshness which the original does not at all warrant. Nor can we do justice to the meaning of the question itself, which may very likely have been a proverbial form of expression, often in use among the people. The meaning is, "You are thinking very differently from Me"; and the suggestion is, "Let Me carry out My plans in My own way." Of course all depends in such a case on the manner in which the words are spoken, and there were doubtless a tone, a smile, and perhaps a fond gesture or touch, accompanying the words in this case, which the narrative could not possibly reproduce.

Vers. 14, 19.—In these verses two different words are used for "temple," of which Thayer says, "*τὸ ἱερόν* and *ὁ ναός* differ, in that the former designates the whole compass of the sacred inclosure, embracing

the entire aggregate of buildings, balconies, porticoes, courts belonging to the temple; the latter designates the sacred edifice properly so called, consisting of two parts, the 'sanctuary' or 'holy place,' and the 'holy of holies' or 'most holy place'" (Grimm's Lexicon).

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 3.—"Born again," or "from above," as many expositors prefer to render it. "But," as Grimm remarks, "according to this explanation, Nicodemus ought to have wondered how it was possible for any one to be born *from heaven*" (Lexicon, ed. Thayer), whereas it is a second birth that he cannot understand. Our Revisers have happily rendered the word "anew," thus preserving the idea of repetition, but also indicating that not mere repetition, but the beginning of something different, is implied.

Vers. 16-21.—It seems more reasonable to take these verses as the comments of the evangelist on the brief but significant utterance of his Master, unfolded thus in the fuller light of later days.

In vers. 19-21 there are two careful distinctions drawn by the evangelist, one of which reappears in v. 29: *viz.* between the more positive "evil" of ver. 19, and the more negative, silly, worthless "ill" of ver. 20; and again, between the "practising" of worthless deeds, worthless in itself, as issuing in no result deserving the name, and the "doing" of the truth, the realisation of the ideal good, which means, not merely good action, but good result for ever.

Vers. 31-36.—These verses likewise are probably

John the Apostle's own reflections on the words of his former master, the Baptist.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 6.—The word “well” is used to render two Greek words, the one (here, and in ver. 14) signifying “spring,” the other (vers. 11, 12) rather the “cistern” as constructed by man.

Ver. 9.—The last clause of this verse, like the parenthesis in ver. 25 (and possibly the close of ver. 22), is a comment by the evangelist.

Ver. 28.—“To the men”: *i.e.* the people generally, this not being the distinctive word for man.

Ver. 44.—Meyer indicates the true connexion of these words, somewhat obscured as it is by the peculiar structure of the passage, in which one has to read between the lines. “The words give the *reason* why He did not hesitate to return to Galilee. If, as Jesus Himself testified, a prophet had no honour *in his own country*, he must seek it *abroad*. And this Jesus had done. Abroad, in Jerusalem, He had by His mighty works inspired the Galilæans who were there with that respect which they were accustomed to deny to a prophet at home. Thus He brought the prophet's honour with Him *from abroad*.”

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1.—“While μετὰ τοῦτο marks the immediate consecution of events, μετὰ ταῦτα links together facts

more remote from each other in point of time" (Tholuck).

Vers. 3-7.—See R.V., margin, for what is probably an old interpolation (A.V., ver. 4).

Ver. 16.—"Because He did," or, "was in the habit of doing" (*ἐποίει*); for He never scrupled to do good on the Sabbath day (Matt. xii. 12).

Ver. 39. — "Ye search" (certainly indicative): meaning, "to indulge in subtle enquiries, to analyse by the letter" (Tholuck); while the essential teaching, the vital spirit, of their Scriptures they ignored (Matt. xxiii. 23, 24).

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1.—"The sea of Galilee, of Tiberias": "It may be that John added the more definite to the general designation for the sake of foreign readers, in order to give them more certain information of the locality" (Winer, Greek Testament Grammar, ed. Moulton, p. 239). See xxi. 1.

Ver. 3.—Tholuck conjectures that *ὄρος* (mountain) is used, as in the LXX., for *ὄρεινή* (hill-country), and refers to the highlands around the hollow of the lake. Comp. Matt. v. 1, Mark iii. 13, Luke ix. 28.

Vers. 22-24.—The meaning of this involved sentence seems to be, that the people who had remained on the other side of the lake, hoping again to see Jesus, when they found that He did not show Himself, and that His disciples did not return as they would have done had He been remaining, concluded

that He must have gone to Capernaum some other way, and therefore availed themselves of the boats, that had perhaps been driven in by stress of weather, in order to get quickly to Capernaum and find Him there.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1.—“After these things”: see note on v. 1.

Ver. 8.—Even if we accept the reading, “I go not up unto the feast” (omitting “yet”: see R.V., margin), the meaning would simply be that Christ would not go up publicly, and as keeping the feast in any official capacity, but—if He so chose, and at His own time—quietly, and as an unobserved observer.

Ver. 24.—Μὴ κρίνετε κατ’ ὄψιν, “Judge not according to appearance”; *i.e.* as taking only a superficial view of My behaviour in the case of the seeming Sabbath-breaking: perhaps no other rendering than this is tenable. But, if only we might take κατ’ ὄψιν as meaning “with (mere) semblance (of judgment),” *i.e.* without regard for real equity, how perfectly this rebuke would accord with their whole conduct, and what point it would give to the severely ironical rebuke of Nicodemus (see exposition of vers. 47–51)!

Ver. 28.—Faith, however, should seize on the Divine meaning of events, on the intrinsically Divine significance of Christ’s work and mission.

Ver. 39.—See reference to this passage in exposition of iii. 12–21. The Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, *i.e.* with His Divine-human influence, was not in the world, not possible, till after Christ’s glorification.

CHAPTER VIII.

Chap. vii. 53 to viii. 11.—The evidence against the genuineness of this passage may be thus summarised : “ It is omitted by all the oldest Greek MSS. with one exception ; marked by asterisks [as doubtful] in many MSS. which contain it ; inserted in other places (at the end of the Gospel, after vii. 36, or after Luke xxi.) by other MSS. ; omitted by important versions, and by the oldest Fathers ; and the critical character of the text is such as to distinguish it from the rest of the book. The internal evidence leads forcibly to the same conclusion. The language of the narrative is different from that of St. John, both in vocabulary and in structure ; and the general ‘ tone ’ of the narrative is alien from St. John, and akin to the tone of the common Synoptic basis. But it may be asked how the narrative came to be inserted ? The answer can be given with tolerable certainty. A narrative very similar to this was preserved by Papias, and was found also in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The object of Papias was to collect traditions illustrative of ‘ the oracles of the Lord.’ It is then a most natural conjecture that this incident was given by Papias in illustration of viii. 15 ; and so was inserted in the text, on which it had been originally a marginal note, in the nearest convenient place ” (Westcott).

Ver. 15.—Comp. *κατὰ τὴν σάρκα* with the suggested translation of *κατ’ ὄψιν*, vii. 24 : to judge carnally is to judge with only the semblance of judgment.

Ver. 24.—“In your sin” (ver. 21); and “in your sins,” as the ever-growing evil fruit of the sin from which they would not let Him save them.

Ver. 25.—Perhaps the most satisfactory rendering of this “extremely difficult passage” is the one given by Grimm: “*I am altogether or wholly (i.e. in all respects, precisely) that which I even speak to you (I not only am, but also declare to you what I am; therefore you have no need to question Me)*”—(Lexicon, ed. Thayer). For He has just made the first statement of that thrice-reiterated truth (vers. 24, 28, 58), “I AM.” “‘I AM,’” they say; “what does that mean? *who art thou?*” And He replies, in effect, “My character and mission are altogether expressed and manifested in My declarations; all is told that the world needs to know in order to trust Me utterly for salvation.”

Vers. 30, 31.—There is an important distinction here between “believing,” and “believing on,” Christ.

Ver. 58.—Perhaps the fullest and most solemn declaration of Messiahship that He ever made. (See Supplemental Note, p. 325.)

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 2.—The old notion, although exploded in the Book of Job, still held its ground with many of the Jews, that suffering infallibly indicated sin—if not the sin of the individual (and this possibly ante-natal, they would say), then of his parents.

Ver. 4.—“We” (R.V.)—for He would make them feel their responsibility as workers with Him.

Ver. 41.—For the blindness of misfortune there is hope ; for wilful blindness none.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1.—Observe the distinction between κλέπτῃς and ληστής, as also in ver. 8. The Vulgate translates *fur* and *latro*, which brings out the distinction well ; and Wycliffe puts it very quaintly, but with great force, “Treuli, treuli, Y seie to ȝou, he that cometh not in by the dore in to the foold of scheep, but stieth [*i.e.* goeth up] bi another weie, is a nyȝt thief and a dai thief” (New Testament, ed. Skeat, p. 207). For the first word used by our Lord implies stealth, as of those who come furtively under cover of night ; the second denotes the more open violence of those who come in broad daylight to attack and destroy.

Ver. 4.—“When He hath put forth *all* His own” (R.V.): so careful that none be lost.

Ver. 9.—The under-shepherds themselves are saved only through Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and their very work for others is intimately bound up with their own salvation, as also their salvation with their work.

Vers. 14, 15.—The separation of these words in the A.V. has altogether dislocated and destroyed their wondrous meaning. To what shall He compare His love for His people ? He can compare it to nothing less than the everlasting love of the Father for the Son ! Comp. xiv. 20 ; xv. 9, 10 ; xvii. 8, 21–26.

Ver. 16.—“One flock, one Shepherd”: “The translation ‘fold’ for ‘flock’ has been most disas-

trous in idea and in influence. Nothing is said of one 'fold' under the new dispensation" (Westcott).

Ver. 29.—Or, as in R.V. margin, "That which My Father hath given unto Me is greater than all"—comp., for similar use of the neuter, vi. 39, xvii. 2. The connexion of thought is thus rather difficult, but it would seem to be: "No alien power can snatch away from My care that which is given to Me of God; indeed, in itself it is 'more than conqueror' over every foe, having the twofold strength of God and His Christ" (see Rom. viii. 35–39).

Ver. 38.—"That you may learn to know (γνῶτε), and may at length acknowledge (γινώσκητε)" (Godet).

CHAPTER XI.

Vers. 6, 7.—The connexion of thought is somewhat obscured by the intervening words, "He abode," etc.; but it may be brought out by attention to the particle μέν which connects those words with the preceding: "When therefore He heard that he was sick, He abode indeed still for two days in the place where He was, (but) then after this He saith to the disciples," etc.

Ver. 20.—"Martha appears to have been engaged in some household duty, and so first heard of the Lord's approach; Mary was still in her chamber, so that the tidings did not at once come to her (ver. 29). Comp. Luke x. 38 ff." (Westcott). An undesigned coincidence with the portraiture in Luke x. 38–42.

Ver. 26.—Our Burial Service quite misses the meaning ("shall not die eternally"); for, "according to the universal usage of St. John," *shall never die*

"must be the sense of the original phrase" (Westcott).

Ver. 29.—It is evident that she had not known of His arrival before: see on ver. 20.

Ver. 32.—She says nothing more: comp. vers. 21, 22. But "her eyes are homes of silent prayer" ("In Memoriam," xxxii.).

Ver. 33.—"He shook with indignation of spirit, and distressed Himself," in view of these ravages of the arch-destroyer (viii. 44: comp. Heb. ii. 14).

Ver. 35.—"Wept," *not* "*wailed*," as in vers. 31, 33. But of what precious significance are these simple words: ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (see Heb. iv. 15)!

Ver. 48.—"Both our place and our nation": their sacred city and temple, and their civil polity.

Vers. 49-53.—That was the "Annus Mirabilis" of the world's history, so that it is not to be wondered at that the high priest, at such a critical time, should prophesy truly in spite of himself: comp. Acts ii. 23. The Pharisees were the men of bitter spirit, self-blinded bigotry making them His utter foes; but the more cold-blooded, and quite unscrupulous, Sadducees took the practical initiative for compassing His death.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 6.—Observe the correction in the R.V.: not "bare what was put therein," but "took away," *i.e.* purloined and appropriated to his own purposes.

Ver. 7.—"Suffer her to keep it against the day of My burying." Some suppose this to mean, Let her keep what remains, for My embalmment. But it is

more agreeable to the tenor of the whole narrative, as well as more consistent with the accounts of the Synoptists, to take "keep" in the sense of "observe," and so to understand Jesus as bidding the disciples (and Judas in particular) allow Mary to indulge in the observance of this ceremonial of love, if only as in anticipation of His death.

Ver. 19.—Perhaps a tacit acknowledgment that the rebuke of Caiaphas was just, and that only the rougher and more determined Sadducean policy would be likely to prevail (xi. 47-53, and vers. 10, 11).

Ver. 27.—It seems better to take the words, "Father, save Me from this hour," interrogatively: meaning, Is this the prayer that I shall pray?

Ver. 32.—The only "universalism" which Christ's words encourage, as interpreted in harmony with the occasion, is national, not individual: so Rom. i. 16; 1 Cor. i. 24.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1.—A great controversy has exercised the minds of interpreters, as to whether John and the Synoptists do not disagree in their identification of the day of our Lord's death, John seeming to represent His death as on the day when the Passover should have been eaten, and the Synoptists as on the day following. This verse, with xviii. 28, xix. 14, 31, is regarded as favouring the former view, whereas the other Gospels unmistakably represent the Last Supper as being itself the Passover Feast. An exhaustive discussion of this controversy may be found in Tholuck,

pp. 302–318, and his conclusion is strongly against the possibility of any such discrepancy, for, as he says, nothing is less likely than that the apostles of Christ would have made a mistake in a matter which, in all its details, was indelibly impressed on their memory. Nor need any strain be put upon these passages of John's Gospel to bring them into harmony with the view of the Synoptists—*viz.* that Christ and His disciples kept the Feast of the Passover on the day appointed by law; for the term “the Feast” covered all the days of the festival (see ver. 29, and xviii. 28), and the term “Preparation” (xix. 14, 31, 42) had special reference to the Sabbath. As to the verse before us, the meaning would be, that, before the feast actually came on, the love of Christ for His disciples reached its utmost pitch of intensity in view of His near death.

“To the uttermost” (R.V. margin)—for “the usual meaning of *εἰς τέλος* in good Greek is: *to an extreme, to the greatest degree*” (Godet). This *εἰς τέλος* of utmost love reached its utmost manifestation in the *Τετέλεσται* of the Cross (xix. 30), and thus secured the salvation of His people *εἰς τὸ παντελές* (Heb. vii. 25).

Ver. 2.—*Καὶ δείπνου γινομένου* (the better reading) means, not as in A.V., but, “And supper being ready.”

Ver. 34.—The newness of the commandment was in the words, “as I have loved you”; for only now was love made beautiful and glorious by the example and inspiration of Christ's love (see 1 John ii. 7, 8).

Vers. 36–38.—Peter's heart was right with Christ—he was “clean”; but what washing off of contracted defilement would be needed by-and-by!

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1.—There seems every reason to take the latter words of this verse as a double imperative.

Ver. 2.—“In the hous of my fadir ben many dwellyngis,” is Wycliffe’s better rendering.

Ver. 9.—Wycliffe, following the punctuation of the Vulgate, makes the application more telling: “Filip, he that seeth me, seeth also the fadir.”

Ver. 10.—There is a suppressed meaning here, which has to be supplied, if we would apprehend the connexion of thought: “The words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself [but from God]; and the Father abiding in Me doeth His works [through My working, as attesting the divineness of the words].” The “but” carries the suppressed adversative assertion, which the statement that it introduces is intended to confirm.

Vers. 13, 14.—To ask in the name of Jesus means, no mere mechanical repetition of a formula, but to pray in full sympathy with His character and will.

Ver. 16.—“Another Paraclete,” *i.e.* Advocate or Helper (R.V., margin). Παράκλητος means literally “*summoned, called to one’s side*, especially called to one’s aid: hence (1) an advocate; (2) an intercessor (1 John ii. 1); (3) a helper” (Grimm’s Lexicon, ed. Thayer). While the more general meaning of “Helper” may be partly hinted at, and thus the function of “Comforter” may be regarded as indirectly implied, though not expressed, at the same time the specific meaning of “advocate” stands out most

prominently, not merely because this is the primary significance of the word itself in ordinary use, but because the whole tenor of the discourse demands it. Jesus had been their one advocate hitherto, but "Another" should take His place, doing His work.

Ver. 23.—"And make Our abode with him." It is much to be regretted that not even a marginal note indicates to the reader of the R.V. that the same word is used here as in ver. 2 (there unhappily rendered "mansion"), and still more that the R.V. is in this instance, as in some others, untrue to its own principle of rendering the same Greek word uniformly, whenever the sense allows it; for in this case, indeed, the sense not only allows, but demands the application of the principle.

Vers. 30, 31.—The connexion of thought perhaps best comes out if we take the last clause of the 30th verse parenthetically: "the prince of this world cometh—not indeed as finding any congenial impulse in My heart—but for a final struggle, which shall manifest to the world for ever My utter fidelity to the Father's will." That is, he should be allowed to come, for his own undoing (Westcott).

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 7.—"Whatsoever ye will"—but, as the result of the reciprocal "abiding" here spoken of, Christ's will and theirs will be one.

Ver. 9.—There is a beautiful parallelism of thought and language between the former part of this verse and the latter clause of xx. 21, though strangely

enough, in spite of the identical structure of the Greek, the R.V. fails to preserve the perfect parallelism of language, and is perhaps hardly emphatic enough in its rendering of the first word :

Καθὼς ἠγάπησέν με ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἠγάπησα.

Καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς.

Which may be rendered :

“Just as the Father [hath] loved Me, I also [have] loved you”;

“Just as the Father [hath] sent Me, I also send you.”

And, though there might seem at first to be a contradiction between the love of the Father to the Son, and His sending Him to shame and death, as also between Christ's love for His disciples, and His sending them to be persecuted, suffer, and die ; yet the truest love, human and Divine, is that which will bid the beloved one obey the claims of high and noble duty, whatever the sacrifice, although the love which thus bids the beloved one suffer, and be true, is itself pierced with unutterable pangs, the while it rejoices with sublimely solemn joy.

Ver. 26.—“Which *goeth forth from* the Father” (R.V., margin): spoken of His mission to mankind, not of His eternal “procession” of being.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 2.—“Offereth service unto God”: the word *λατρεία* signifies religious “service,” in the more technical sense of the word (comp. Rom. xii. 1 ; also Rom. i. 9, ix. 4). This hatred and murder were

actually their very religion ! Thus does sin invert and pervert all realities.

Ver. 4.—“ These things I said not unto you *from the beginning* ” (R.V.), *i.e.* not with any continuous declaration, from the first, of these sad truths ; though *at the beginning* He had hinted such things (Matt. v. 10–12 ; Luke vi. 22, 23 ; Matt. x. 16–23 ; Luke xii. 4, 11), as foretokening the fuller announcement by-and-by.—“ Because I was with you ” : *i.e.* “ because I thus had it in My power to tell you at any time, and had neither inclination nor need to tell you something painful and oppressive too soon ” (Lange).

Ver. 5.—The question had indeed been asked by Peter (xiii. 36), and hinted by Thomas (xiv. 5) ; but they had not followed up the enquiry, in view of His subsequent utterances, with the spiritual wistfulness which He sought to inspire.

Vers. 23, 24.—“ And in that day ye shall *ask Me no question* ” (R.V., margin), *i.e.* in the wondering perplexity that baffles faith ; but, “ if ye shall *ask*,” as those that are bewildered and confounded no longer, but know that their Lord lives and loves, and can and will do all things for them, then “ ye shall receive, that your joy [already great in the assurance of anticipation] may be fulfilled [in the realisation of the anticipated good].” It is important to bear in mind this distinction between ἐρωτήσετε and αἰτήσητε—asking questions, and asking in prayer. (Comp. vers. 5, 19.)

Ver. 27.—“ *Came forth from the Father* ” : indicating, not the eternal Sonship, but the human mission of the eternal Son (see note on xv. 26).

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 3.—It is not in accordance with our Lord's usage to speak of Himself as "Jesus Christ," so these words may be perhaps best understood as an explanatory comment thrown in by the evangelist; in which case we might fitly take "the only true God" as likewise the evangelist's words.

Ver. 11.—"Holy Father": a fitting appellation of God, as introductory to that part of the prayer which is concerned with the need of holiness on the part of the disciples (Πάτερ ἅγιε . . . ἁγιάσον αὐτούς: vers. 17, 19).

Ver. 12.—Ἐτήρουν "expresses watchful care," ἐφύλαξα "indicates safe custody" (Thayer, in Grimm's Lexicon). See 1 John v. 18, 21.

Ver. 14.—"Thy word" (see vers. 6, 17, 20) is the complete message of the gospel, as distinguished from the separate "words," or "sayings" (ver. 8), which were given as the disciples were able to bear them.

Ver. 15.—"From the evil *one*" (R.V.): see xiv. 30.

Ver. 19.—"Ἀγιάζω in the present, with ὑπέρ, can only be understood of Christ's self-consecration to His sacrificial death" (Tholuck). Not, however, as excluding reference to that devotion of His life, of which the voluntary death was the climax and crown.—"In truth": *i.e.*, perhaps, "truly" (comp. "in the truth," ver. 17).

Ver. 24.—"I will": what a sense of Divine royalty!

Ver. 25.—The Holy God will care for the sanctification of His people (see ver. 11); the Righteous God will see to the proper governance of the world.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1.—The preponderance of authority is in favour of the reading τῶν Κέδρων (“of the Cedars”), instead of τοῦ Κεδρών, or τοῦ Κέδρον (“of Kidron”). But this was only a popular name for the brook Kidron.

Ver. 8.—Once afterwards this Ἐγὼ εἰμι sounds forth from His lips (Mark xiv. 62), and He thus deliberately makes His own avowal of His Messiahship the occasion of His death.

Vers. 13, 14.—Annas was an ex-high priest, of immense influence, who would naturally be accorded the place of honour at these informal meetings. Moreover, Caiaphas was to act on this occasion rather as instigator of the movement for Christ's death.

Ver. 24.—This verse marks the transition to the fully constituted meeting of the Sanhedrim, over which Caiaphas must of course preside, in virtue of his office. John omits the details, as being already familiar through the accounts of the Synoptists.

Ver. 28.—The Passover supper had been eaten the previous evening, but they had in view the continuation of the festival.

Ver. 37.—Σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασιλεὺς εἰμι, *i.e.* “Thou sayest, for I am a King.” Some take the ὅτι as merely declarative, but surely the causative significance has much more force here. Thus the Vulgate, “Tu dicis, quia rex sum ego”; rendered by Wycliffe,

"Thou seist, that Y am a King." The German Bible (revision of Luther's translation) renders, "Du sagst's, ich bin ein König"; and Segond's French translation, "Tu le dis, je suis roi." See R.V. margin, and recommendation of American Revisers.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 2.—"A purple garment": probably not the "gorgeous apparel" of Luke xxiii. 11.

Ver. 11.—The meaning of this somewhat difficult saying seems to be: "My case comes before thee for trial only through the providential permission of God, who has allowed this temporary Gentile jurisdiction over the affairs of His people. But theirs is the actual responsibility for bringing a case, exclusively affecting their own religious hopes, before a secular tribunal. Had they been true to their history, to their God, they would never thus have dealt with their own Christ. Thine is the sin of unrighteous judgment in the case thus brought before thee; theirs is the greater sin of bringing the Messiah as a victim to thy bar." (By "*He that delivered Me unto thee*" is meant Caiaphas, the representative of the Jewish faith.)

Ver. 14.—For references to the "Preparation" spoken of here and in vers. 31, 42, see on xiii. 1, xviii. 28. The Friday was the preparation for the great Passover Sabbath.

Ver. 28.—"That the Scripture might be accomplished": He had now fulfilled all "the law and the prophets" (Matt. v. 17); and, even to the details of

the law's symbolism and of the words of prophecy, there was fulfilment of all things in His death (vers. 36, 37).

Vers. 34, 35.—On the meaning of this phenomenon, perhaps not understood by John himself in all its bearings, see a most interesting account of "The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ" (with special reference to a treatise by Dr. Stroud, bearing the same title, and published in 1847), in Hanna's "Last Day of our Lord's Passion," pp. 290-314, 333-343. The conclusion, so strongly accordant also with the inmost significance of our Lord's atoning work, is that He died, not of crucifixion, but of a broken heart. The death began, then, in Gethsemane, and the crucifixion did but alter its outward form and complexion.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 2.—"Whom Jesus loved": how exquisitely thoughtful and tender of the evangelist thus to share his own special appellation with his friend, in speaking of the very time when Peter was still overwhelmed with shame in the remembrance of the denial of his Lord!—"We know not": a delicate coincidence with the synoptical accounts of the visit of the *women* to the tomb.

Ver. 17.—The old manner of fellowship, as when He "tabernacled among us" (i. 14), is to be superseded by the more intimate fellowship of soul with soul. But for this best, this spiritual communion, Mary must wait till Jesus has passed into the heavens.

Vers. 22, 23.—The true meaning of His death, and risen life, was flashed upon them now, and the power of the truth was breathed into their souls. But, for that fusion of their sympathies and affections into one concentrated glow of consuming devotion, which should constrain them to bring all the meaning of His life and death into such contact with other souls that they likewise should have life through Christ—for this they must wait, and pray, till Pentecost (Luke xxiv. 49 ; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15). It is significant that to all the disciples, men and women, these words were spoken.

CHAPTER XXI.

Vers. 15–17.—The judgment of Grimm (Lexicon, ed. Thayer, p. 653) agrees with the foregoing exposition: “As to the distinction between ἀγαπᾶν and φιλεῖν, the former properly denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem, like the Lat. *diligere* ; but φιλεῖν denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion, Lat. *amare*.” To the same effect remarks Cremer (Biblico-Theological Lexicon, p. 11): “We shall not go wrong if we define the distinction thus: φιλεῖν denotes the love of natural inclination, affection,—love, so to say, originally spontaneous, involuntary (*amare*) ; ἀγαπᾶν, on the other hand, love as a direction of the will (*diligere*).” See also Trench (New Testament Synonyms, pp. 38–42), who, after pointing out the distinction between the two words in agreement with the above, and remarking on the significance of the distinction in the passage now

referred to, says: "All this subtle and delicate play of feeling disappears, perforce, in a translation which either does not care, or is not able, to reproduce the variation in the words as it exists in the original" (pp. 40, 41).

Ver. 22.—"If I will that he abide *while I am coming*" (Bartlett's translation, "Scriptures, Hebrew and Christian," vol. iii., p. 581): for Christ would be always at hand, His Advent would be in progress; so that many a time John would have cause to say, "*It is the Lord*" (ver. 7), and, when at the last death came, he would sweetly breathe his life away into the fulness of that better life to which his Lord was welcoming him (xiv. 3).

Not only did the beloved disciple himself thus tarry till Jesus took him gently home, but his teaching,—so tender, so spiritual, so true,—outstripped at first by the impetuous preaching of Peter, and left somewhat aside by the masterful reasoning of Paul, is perhaps destined to linger sweetly with the Christians of the latest age, preparing them for the vision and greeting of Him, who, always "coming," shall have fully "come" at last, to claim His own.

Vers. 24, 25.—These words were probably added by the Ephesian Church after John's death, the foregoing part of the chapter being itself seemingly an appendix (or epilogue), added by the apostle to the gospel as previously concluding with the words of xx. 30, 31.

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE.

THE SELF-ASSERTION OF JESUS.

Chap. viii., vers. 24, 28, 58.

IN these three remarkable statements of the same notable discourse to the unbelieving Jews, our Lord utters, with most solemn reiteration, the word which, small and comparatively insignificant as it is in its merely copulative usage, *i.e.* as connecting subject and predicate, yet when thus used as itself the full predicate means so much that it befits no merely human life. "I AM": *i.e.* "I exist in a plenitude and self-sufficiency of life to which there attaches no sort of creaturely dependence; and (for this was the meaning of the analogous utterance in the early days of the older covenant: Exod. iii. 14) My fulness of life and love and power is the only hope, and should be the full hope and confidence, of My redeemed people." God had promised that He would thus be all things to His people; what God had promised, Christ came to fulfil. No utterance could possibly convey a fuller assertion of Divine Saviourhood than the simple *Ἐγώ εἰμι* of these three passages.

But this simplest utterance of so stupendous a truth is amplified in such other utterances as those of vii. 37, 38, and viii. 12; and these instances of the significant self-assertion of Jesus abound in His teaching (or preaching, to speak more precisely),

especially as recorded in this fourth Gospel. And the great alternative which must be fairly faced by all who would appraise His claims, and estimate His mission and character, is obviously the truth or falseness of His self-assertion, which, if true, carries with it the full reality of His Divine nature and redemptive work; if untrue, either proves Him deceived, or brands Him a deceiver. Either the *Ἐγώ εἰμι* of Christ is the world's hope, or, in one or other sense, those words were true which the people spoke, *δαυμόνιον ἔχεις*.

The alternative being fairly faced, only one conclusion is possible. That He whose spiritual insight was confessedly supreme, and to whose teaching the world owes, practically, all that it possesses of spiritual truth, should have been egregiously self-deceived in this the central truth of all His teaching and preaching—this, surely, is beyond belief, and, if believed, would itself invalidate all belief; while, that He whose character is acknowledged to have been supreme in true goodness should have deliberately traded on the trust of men, and that all the goodness which, through the Christian centuries, has flowered into beauty from that faith, and borne fruits of divinest virtue, should draw its vital energy and excellence from a lie—this is the *reductio ad absurdum* of history and of thought alike. Therefore the self-affirmation of Jesus is the Amen (ver. 58) of God, which is reverently and thankfully re-uttered by the faith of man.*

* See Liddon's Bampton Lectures, on "Our Lord's Divinity," pp. 161-206, where the argument is elaborately worked out.

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